

THE LIFE OF
HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

BY
SIGNE TOKSVIG

ILLUSTRATED



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TO
P. K. TOKSVIG
AND
MARIE TOKSVIG

PREFATORY NOTE

THE subject of this biography is sometimes called Hans Andersen, but in his own country he is always known as H. C. Andersen or as Hans Christian Andersen. No one can write of him to-day without acknowledging indebtedness to Professor Hans Brix for his masterly analysis of the man as revealed in his fairy-tales, but mention must also be made of the aid to be gained from Dr. Helweg's psychiatric study, from Rigmor Stampe's and Elith Reumert's warm-hearted books, Inga Nalbandian's small but significant pamphlets, and Professor Paul V. Rubow's analysis of the tales, as well as his sensitive preface to the Henriques letters. Edvard Collin himself wrote of Andersen in his relation to the Collin family, and Jonas Collin edited the later diaries. The work of Karl Larsen, Vilh. Andersen, H. G. Olrik, and Julius Clausen should also be noted, while my special thanks are due to Hr. H. Topsøe-Jensen, Assistant Librarian at the Royal Library, Copenhagen, for his excellent editions of Andersen letters and for his great kindness in reading this biography in manuscript and revising certain details. Many other contributors to the study of Andersen could be mentioned, but the most important of all is, of course, Hans Christian Andersen himself, who directly and indirectly in his stories, in his autobiographies, and in his spontaneous letters, bequeathed himself to posterity.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

(My best thanks are due to Mr. Herman Bente, of the Jonals Co., Copenhagen, for his untiring help in obtaining these illustrations. The silhouettes, or "scissor-pictures", on the jacket are by H. C. Andersen. The drawings on the inside papers are from an early illustrated edition of the fairy-tales. The originals, by the Danish artist Vilhelm Pedersen, are in "Andersen's House", Odense. Photos by Lønborg.)

"In a few Long Leaps he was up the Winding Staircase" . . . *Frontispiece*
Photo by Lindegaard of stairs in Andersen's first Copenhagen lodgings.

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CHAPTER I

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN liked to say that his career was a proof of the existence of a guiding Providence. His mother was an illiterate washerwoman, his father was a poor cobbler not very well balanced, his grandfather died insane. The family lived in one room in a small Danish town. They were nobody. They had nothing except this frail awkward boy, whom most people thought queer enough to be going the way of his grandfather. But within the boy's lifetime he saw his fairy-tales translated into the world languages and his person decorated by several of the many orders then available. Dukes and duchesses, princes and princesses, kings and queens competed to honour him; while even fellow-artists admitted his great gifts, not to say genius.

The jump was a long one, and Hans Christian never tired contemplating its length. He was certainly not modest in the ordinary sense of the word. He did not make little of his gifts. Had he always been as modest as his admonishing friends in later life wanted him to be, they would never have known him. He would have been a sensible poor fellow who knew his place, the station, that is, to which others had assigned him. But luckily he decided on his own place, fixing it impossibly high. All sensible people agreed that this was vanity, but, whatever it was, with this lever he lifted himself out of poverty and ignorance at a time when an education was far from being a present forced on every child, and when the European caste system still had some starch in it.

Yet the beckoning shine and glitter of this very caste system may have helped to lure him on. Perhaps if the town of Odense, where Hans Christian Andersen was born in April 1805, had been the ordinary sleepy little affair, whose peaks of aristocracy would be the pastor and the lawyer, his ambition might never have been stirred. But Odense, though it had only seven thousand inhabitants, displayed nearly the whole range of human society. Odense had a real palace in which resided the governor,

who was a real prince. A kind of court flourished around him of the country nobility who had houses in town, and there were gaily coated regiments in garrison, notably the dragoons with their flashing sabres and bright Greek helmets crested with flowing horsehair. There were civic officials, well-to-do traders, and solid artisans, who still paraded in guild formation. Beneath all these were the respectable poor, to whom the Andersens belonged, and under these again were the disrespectable poor, so to speak, but they were mainly lodged in the large and sombre penitentiary not far from Hans Christian's home. The prison, too, helped to stir his imagination. He shuddered away from brutishness and coarseness, and climbed with frail persistent tendrils up towards sunshine, gentle society, poetry.

The impulse certainly came from his own innermost being, but it was aided, not stifled, in his home, poor though it was. The tenderness for children, the real respect for their personality which is so Danish, was given to him in overflowing measure.

His mother, Ane Marie Andersdatter, had had one illegitimate child by a journeyman potter before she married Hans Andersen, the cobbler, and the marriage took place in haste only two months before ~~the boy~~ ^{the boy} was born. But these slips from strictness did not degrade her. ~~Virtue~~ ^{Virtue}, in the kindly island of Fyn, has not got its meaning limited to the keeping of a sexual code. Ane Marie took in washing to help the family income; and she was a self-respecting, competent mistress of her home, though it consisted of only one room in a house crammed with other poor people. Whenever Hans Christian wanted to describe a staunch and loving mother keeping a small home comfortably together, he went to his childhood.

For his father also he had great affection, and no doubt he owed his impulse towards the heights to him. Hans Andersen, who was only twenty-three when his son was born, looked a meek little man, small, blond, and round-faced, overtopped by his tall, dark, bony wife, who was fifteen years older. But Hans Andersen had brains and an unusual amount of self-made education. He read the plays of Holberg, the Danish Molière; he jeered at superstition; he reasoned about religion. His mother claimed descent from a noble lady in Germany who had run away with an actor, but her family had a humble Danish origin,

and she gilded her poverty with day-dreams. Her husband became insane quite early, a harmless maniac, who wandered singing and flower-wreathed through the streets. This bad heritage checked Hans Andersen's will-power so that he spent his life, day-dreaming and dissatisfied, on his cobbler's stool.

These were the people to whom the poet was born, seemingly a washerwoman and a cobbler, in reality a sturdy practicality and a high-strung, ambitious imagination. It was the blending of those qualities that made Hans Christian Andersen, as it was the courage and sensitiveness of his parents that sheltered his childhood. He was always grateful. Many years later, when he first entered the cathedral of Milan and was overwhelmed by the suavely coloured flood of light that streamed through the high windows into the incense-laden darkness, he compared this light to the lambent radiance which haloed his earliest years for him. Whatever he wrote about it was bathed in this effulgence, and distance and gratitude effaced all shadows.

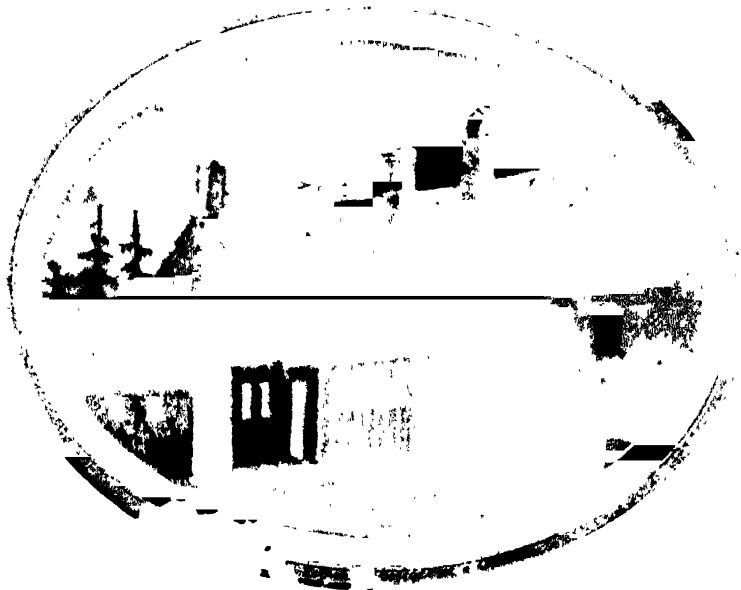
"The one and only little room, almost filled by the cobbler's bench and the bedstead and the folding bench in which I slept, this was my childhood home, but the walls were covered with pictures, there were pretty cups, glasses and knick-knacks on the chest of drawers, and over the cobbler's bench by the window was a shelf with books and songs. In the little kitchen a row of pewter plates hung over the larder, and the tiny space seemed vast and rich to me. The door itself, with a landscape painted on the panel, meant as much to me then as a whole picture gallery now!"

From the kitchen a ladder led up to the attic, and in the gutter between the red-tiled roofs of their house and the neighbour's was a box filled with earth, in which grew chives and parsley, all his mother's garden.

He was the only child. Karen Marie, his half-sister, seems to have been boarded out with country-people before the mother got married. At any rate, she concentrated all her affection on her boy; and he says he was properly spoiled, but that she never failed to tell him he was far happier than she had ever been—when she was a child she had been sent out to beg, and as she could not do it, she had spent the whole day crying under a

bridge. Hans Christian could see it all in his imagination, and he wept for her.

Hans Andersen, his father, also let him have his own way in everything; the boy had his entire love, he lived for him. Sunday, his only day of leisure, he spent in making toys and pictures for the child; while in the evening he would often read aloud, both from Holberg's plays and from *Thousand and One Nights*. The



ANDERSEN'S CHILDHOOD HOME IN ODENSE

boy did not remember ever seeing him smile, except when he was reading, but he remembered seeing tears in his eyes when a student from the academy had come for a pair of boots and had shown his books and talked about everything he was learning. "That was the way I should have been let go", he said, kissed his little son hard, and was silent the whole evening.

He seldom went to see other people; they had to come to him. In the summer he walked to the woods nearly every Sunday, and the boy went with him. Once there, he lay down on his back in the grass and brooded silently in the sunshine; while Hans Christian hopped around and strung wild strawberries on a

and shut; the rattling bunch of keys. They went up a steep stair to the porter's room. Food and drink were served, two of the prisoners waiting at table. But Hans Christian, who in no way despised food, could not be moved to touch a thing; he pushed away the most delectable sweets. His mother laid him on a bed, saying he must be sick, and there he stayed; and, whether in reality or in imagination, heard the hum of the spinning-wheels and the swing of the stirring songs. He was in a tickling tension of terror and delight; to him it was the very castle of the robbers. Late at night, worn out by silent excitement, he was carried home.

The dark side to this quivering impressionability was obvious enough. All the old wives' tales of ghosts and goblins and warnings were absorbed into the boy's marrow. He was bitterly afraid of the dark. If he was sent on an errand at night and had to pass the cemetery near to his home where the tall dark cathedral towered, he closed his eyes and rushed by it at full speed, either colliding with a passer-by or measuring his length on the ground. If he had to fetch home buttermilk at night and to pass the Nun's Hill where weird candles were said to burn, he ran in mortal terror until he had crossed the stream. He knew that neither ghosts nor goblins could cross running water.

The main source of this lore was of course his gentle, blue-eyed grandmother, full of tales as well as of the fancied glories of her family. Now she had the job of tending the garden of the hospital for the insane poor. This brought more joys and thrills to her grandson. On Saturday night she brought flowers to his home; they adorned his mother's chest of drawers, but he knew they were *his* flowers, his the pleasure of putting them into a glass of water. And he was allowed to play in the hospital garden, where he soon got to know the flowers almost personally.

Twice a year there was a great burning of the garden rubbish, when Hans Christian lay around in the big green heaps, had plenty of flowers to play with and titbits to eat. The harmless insane often strayed into the courtyard, and he listened to their songs and wild talk with curiosity and fear. Sometimes, if the warders were along, he even followed them into the house where the violently mad were shut up, and peered through cracks in the cells.

Near the place where the garden rubbish was burned was a room where poor old women came to spin. He wandered in there too, and soon became their pet. The tow-headed boy, keen and responsive, with his sweet mouth and small bright eager eyes, was irresistible. The old women were appreciative, and his prattle rose to such heights that they nodded to each other, saying he was much too clever to live long. This flattered him immensely. He had heard that doctors knew the insides of people, had picked up words like heart, lungs, intestines, and boldly he took chalk in hand, covering a door with hocus-pocus to illustrate human physiology. An uncommonly wise child they thought him, and rewarded the entertainment by fairy-tales and folk-tales of every kind. A new world, as rich as *Thousand and One Nights*, opened to him. But the old spinning women's stories, and the snatches of talk from the insane moving about him in the hospital, everything added to his already rich fund of superstition so that he hardly dared to leave the house after twilight. For that reason he was usually allowed to go to bed at sunset—not indeed in his own folding bench, to let it down would have taken up too much space in the little room; he was put at the end of his parents' big bed, a coloured rag-carpet over him. The flowered calico curtains shut him in, the candle burned outside them, he could hear all that was said in the room, and yet he lay as alone in his dreamy fancies as though the world of reality never existed.

Indeed it hardly existed for him out in the daylight. He was one of those children of whom common-sense parents are so suspicious, who seldom play with other children. Perhaps it would be more just to say that they did not play with him, he was quite willing; but he wanted to tell them of the strange and wonderful things that went on in his dream world, which to the rough boys of his own class was a huge joke and not one to be kept secret. He suffered many jeering pursuits. Once a kindly girl came along and found him perched high in a chestnut tree in the churchyard. By his unusually long arms he had hooked himself up into it to escape his tormentors; now he could not get down, and she ran for his father, who rescued him.

His terror of other boys probably also had its root in the fact that whenever he let his fancy wander in their hearing, they

taunted him with being mad like his grandfather. He was afraid of his grandfather, who had only once spoken to him, and then as if to a grown-up stranger. The poor old man was no madder than that he could carve fantastic things in wood, animal-headed people, winged animals, and strange birds; these he put in a basket and hawked around the country, where the farmers' wives gave him food in exchange. Once when he returned to Odense from one of these excursions, Hans Christian heard the boys yelling after him, and, terrified, he hid behind some steps while the wild chase rushed past; he knew he was of the quarry's flesh and blood.

He preferred solitude. At home he had enough toys made by his father, who also had a turn for handicraft. He had cut-out pictures that changed when you pulled a string, a mill that made the miller dance when it was started, a peepshow, and quaint dolls that could nod their heads. He loved making clothes for these dolls, and sometimes he loved just simply to sit in the yard by its one and only gooseberry bush, under his mother's apron, which he had stretched out from the wall by means of a broomstick. That was his tent in rain or shine; he sat there gazing into the leaves of the gooseberry bush, day by day following their development, from little green buds to big yellow dropping leaves. A strange dreamy child, who carried his interior life so far that he often wandered around with his eyes shut, thus making his good mother believe that his sight was bad, although his power of observation attested that it was remarkably good.

It was probably his mother who decided he had been dreaming under the gooseberry bush long enough; at any rate it was she who took him to the infant-school, kept by an old dame, and it was she who stipulated that her Hans Christian was not to be touched by the ferule with which the dame kept order in her circle, mostly consisting of little girls. At first the boy liked it. He easily learned his letters, and next the high-back chair where the dame sat enthroned was a grandfather clock which showed artful moving figures when the hour struck. But when the hour struck that brought the ferule down on Hans Christian's fingers, he rose at once, took his book, and departed home to his mother, requesting that he be put into another school. And he had his

way. Now the mother took him to a school which happened to be for poor Jewish children. He was the youngest boy there, so young in fact that the teacher always held him by the hand during recreation, or he would have been toppled over by the others. They were too big for him, but he did not fear them. When one boy did not know his lesson and had been put up to public shame on the school table, Hans Christian fell into such despair that the culprit was pardoned by the teacher.

Hans Christian liked to draw, and did it rather well. One day he drew a castle and showed it to a little girl; with the astonishing comment that he was really the child of people of rank, and that God's angels came and talked to him. He wanted to dazzle her, as he was used to dazzle the old women at the hospital, but she took it quite differently. She looked at him strangely, and said, turning to a boy near by: "He's mad, like his grandfather".

During the harvest days, he and his mother and other poor sometimes went into the fields to glean what the reapers had left. They were in a field one day, when they saw the bad-tempered steward coming, swinging a terrific dog-whip. All took to their heels, Hans Christian too, but his far too large wooden shoes flew off, and his naked feet were hurt by the stubble, so that he lagged far behind, alone. Already the whip was swung over him, when he looked up into the face above him and burst out, "How dare you hit me, when God can see you!" The angry man turned suddenly gentle, patted his cheek, asked his name, and gave him a few coins. And his mother told the neighbours what a wonderful child her son was; how even the wicked man gave him money.

So far indeed, except for the rougher boys, Hans Christian had no reason to quarrel with his lot. He was pleasantly aware of being a remarkable child, and life was thrilling and enticing to him. He never lacked for anything; though his parents lived from hand to mouth they always contrived to get enough for him. His mother preened him, smoothed him, taught him neatness and politeness. She had an old sempstress make over his father's clothes for him, and pinned bits of silk across his chest to look like a waistcoat. A large handkerchief was tied around his neck with a big bow, his well-washed hair neatly combed to one

side, and he was in full regalia. Thus sleeked up, he went with his parents to the theatre for the first time. His first impression was of the many people, and he exclaimed: "If only we had as many firkins of butter as there are people here, how I'd eat!"

Soon the theatre was his favourite haunt, but since the chances of going there were few, he exercised his undeniable talent for charming, and made friends with the man who distributed the handbills. Soon he could sit at home with a handbill and imagine a whole play based on the names of the piece and of the personages.

Plays as such were no novelty to him. His father had made him a little theatre, and often read Holberg's plays aloud. He would laugh then, with a queer genuine sort of laughter, and the mother would say, "I don't see how you can laugh at that!" to which he answered, "But can't you hear how funny it is! Listen now, to what Henrik is saying." And he would read it aloud again; but still she could not see why he thought it was funny. Holberg's dry sallies failed to amuse her, she would much rather have a thickly sentimental German novel, which they had in translation; she told her boy that that was better than all of father's books, and he ought to read it. After her day's work at the tub and the range, she liked the relaxation of a good cry, and one side of her boy's nature joined her in the luxury of sentimentality. She had more direct influence on him than his father; she it was who taught him piety and superstition. He shuddered with her and the neighbours one night in the year 1811, when the great comet stood in the night sky. In front of the dreaded churchyard, he looked at the terrifying fiery ball with its long gleaming tail. His mother had told him it might knock the earth into bits, or be the portent of other horrible things, as was foretold in the sibyl's prophecy. He was listening to her discussion of this dread warning and the Judgment Day with a cluster of neighbours, when his father came along and gave the scientific explanation of it all; but the mother sighed and the neighbours shook their heads. The cobbler laughed and went away, saying that the worst comets he knew were drink and lotteries; but little Hans Christian was terrified at his father's unbelief. His mother talked it over with the grand-

mother in the evening, and he sat in the old woman's lap, expecting Doomsday.

Ane Marie believed in fortune-tellers as well as in comets. She had one special fortune-teller who, though reputed also to be a witch, was so poor that she came to beg alms even from the cobbler's family. In return she was to tell Hans Christian's fortune. "He'll have better luck than he deserves", she said angrily, as the boy was laughing, egged on by his father; "a wild, high-flying bird he'll be, something great and fine in the world—the time will come when all of Odense will be illuminated for him!"

Hans Christian was secretly thrilled, his mother wept with pure, believing joy, but Hans Andersen laughed and said she was an old fraud.

Hans Andersen was not a happy man. He felt irked and restricted in his narrow sphere. Often he said, a thing never forgotten by his son, that Hans Christian must never be forced into any calling—were it the silliest thing in the world, if he wanted to do it, he should have his way. He never said that if he had not had wife and child he would not be stuck at the cobbler's bench, but the boy probably was able to conclude for himself that marriage and a roving life were not compatible.

His father now began to read the Bible, and one evening when the three of them were sitting together, he said that he did not share their and the neighbours' faith; he believed that Christ had been only a man, though a most wonderful man; that the Bible was not directly inspired by God, and that there was no hell and no devil other than what people carried in their own hearts. It made a fearful impression on his listeners. The mother cried, and the son thought the father damned. "I am a free-thinker", he added, and the word pierced the boy's soul; he did not know its meaning, but felt it was something very much out of the ordinary.

Restless and striving, Hans Andersen tried to better his lot by applying for a job as shoemaker, advertised as vacant on a big country estate. There would be a house rent-free, a little garden, and pasturage for a cow. With this, and with the work assured from the manor, the shoemaker would be certain of a good living. Hans and Ane Marie were absorbed by the possible luck of getting this, and a trial job was given him to do. A piece

of silk was sent him from the manor; he was to furnish the leather himself and make a pair of dancing slippers. All the little family's thoughts and talk centred on those slippers in the couple of days while the fateful work was going on. Hans Christian was wordlessly happy, looking forward to the little garden they were going to have with flowers and bushes, and where he could sit in the sunshine and listen to the liquid drum-beat of the cuckoo. Only one thing worried him: how would he get the theatre programmes which he had been collecting. Luckily he had a friend, an old grocer's widow, who shared his passion: she promised to secure extra copies of the programmes and save them for him. Then he was fully happy, with the marvellous unclouded happiness of anticipation. From the depths of his heart he prayed the Lord to fulfil their wish.

At last the slippers were done. They gazed at them solemnly; here was their future. Hans Andersen wrapped them in his handkerchief and left. His wife and child waited at home, expecting to see him return with a radiant face. But it was a pale and bitter man who came back. The noble lady, he told them, had not even been willing to try on the slippers; she had taken an instant dislike to them, said that her silk was ruined and that he could not be accepted for the job. "If your silk has been wasted", the cobbler said, "I suppose I can put up with wasting my leather", and he took out his knife and cut away the soles. Then they all three sat down and cried over their dead hopes. It seemed to Hans Christian that God might just as well have granted his prayer; in fact that was always his conception of the true business of God; but in later years, with his own incomparable naïveté, he used to wonder if God ruined the happiness of his parents for the sake of his future, for might he not have become a mere farmer if they had gone to live in the country?

From dreams of country peace and security, where he undoubtedly saw himself leading a studious life, Hans Christian's father's fancy roamed in the contrary direction. It was the Napoleonic era in Europe; Napoleon's picture hung even on the Danish cobbler's wall. A soldier's life was the only chance. In it anything was possible, and the "anything" one dwelt on was the marshal's baton in the soldier's knapsack. His home no longer satisfied him: the tedious work, the much older wife who

did not understand him. But he loved his boy, and perhaps it was at least partly because of him that he thought of winning fortune by going for a soldier, staking all to win on that card. The boy was seven now, and for the last couple of years it had been evident that he was far from strong; though what was the matter with him was more than the simple people knew. He had had fits, which they took for epilepsy, but which seem to have been hysteric convulsions due to the drain his too vivid imagination made on his nerves with their inherited weakness. But his mother did not take him to a doctor, they cost money: and besides she said she had no faith in all the stuff they prescribed; it would make one ill to take it; she had far greater faith in various wise women of her large necromantic acquaintance. Decidedly not master in his own house, the sceptic Hans Andersen had to see his boy treated by witchcraft. The wise woman took magic measures of his arms and legs with a woollen thread, and he was given a little bag with churchyard soil and the heart of a mole to wear next his own heart.

But the nervous trouble continued, his eyelids trembled continually, and the fits returned. Hans Andersen finally decided to take the thousand *daler* offered by a conscript soldier for someone to take his place. This money would help keep the family while he was soldiering, and as Denmark might be drawn into war on Napoleon's side, who knew what might come of it?

He became a soldier in 1812 in spite of his wife. "He's getting queer in his head like his father; he wants to go to war." But he remained garrisoned in Odense for a year, and was thus a reluctant witness to another and more radical attempt to cure Hans Christian by magic; in fact he had to ask an advance on his pay to provide the money for it.

The wise woman had finally laid down that Hans Christian's nerves could only be healed if he were taken to the holy well of St. Regisse on St. John's Eve, and bathed in the miraculous water. If this were repeated three years running, a cure was certain.

Denmark had discarded Catholicism three hundred years before, but the sick still sought the holy well of St. Regisse in such numbers on St. John's Eve that the old fair in connection with the pilgrimage continued to be held in the neighbouring

village. When Ane Marie and her boy were on their way to the holy well in the opal twilight of the northern summer, they could hear hammering and sawing from the village where the booths for the fair were being put up. Along every road people came driving or walking with their sick; several were already crossing the meadow where the spring rose among alders and hazels. Sheltered by the bushes, Ane Marie undressed her boy, and ducked him in the fresh cold water. That was the first part, the second was his having to spend the night there. People were preparing for sleep all around. Some had brought an actual bed and set it in the grass; others slept on straw in their wagons; others, and among them Hans Christian, on a heap of straw on the ground. Grass sods sheltered a camp-fire, where the coffee-pot simmered and the old people warmed their hands.

If it is true, as seems likely, that an insane girl slept at Hans Christian's feet, and that a sudden terrific thunderstorm woke her to wild screams and nakedness, it is not probable that the child's quivering nerves were greatly calmed by his trip to the holy well. At any rate, it was not repeated.

The family had other things to worry about. In the autumn of the same year, Hans Andersen's regiment was sent to Holstein to try some of the realities of campaigning. At the time, little Hans Christian was sick in bed with measles, his lips broken out in sores, and he was raving with fever; but the unusual occasion impressed itself on him. He heard his father singing and talking loudly on the day of departure; saw him, in uniform and with a rifle, lean over his bed, and felt the violent emotion with which he kissed the sore lips till they bled. Then he rushed out of the house, and the boy heard the whirl of drums as the regiment marched away.

"Crazy, he is!" was the verdict of the neighbours, "going out to get shot for nothing!"

The old grandmother came to Hans Christian's sick-bed, while the weeping mother was following the soldiers to the city-gate, and her way of consoling him was to sigh and remark that it would be well if the Lord would see fit to take him now, but of course the Lord's will be done anyhow. It was one of the boy's first memories of complete pain. He was eight years old, and the blitheness of childhood was over.

In a few months his father came back. He had not fulfilled the sombre predictions and got shot, but the hardships of a futile campaign had broken his health. It was a waxen and emaciated man who resumed his place on the cobbler's bench.

The boy did not quite realise that things had changed. He played theatre with his dolls, and as he had never heard any plays except in German, he made them talk German: that is to say, a kind of nonsense-language invented by himself, except for the one German word *Besen*, picked up by him from among a few words his father had acquired in Holstein.

"My journey is doing you some good", the father laughed, "Lord knows whether you'll ever go as far as I, but you must; remember that, Hans Christian!"

Anc Marie remarked that while she had anything to say about it, the boy would not be running off to ruin his health.

But the seed was sown. Hans Andersen had passed his restless, striving, yearning spirit on to his son. And, as if that finished his task, he proceeded to die. While he lay on his death-bed, raving that he saw Napoleon, "Hats off, you whelps, when the Emperor rides by!" and believing that at last he was among the commanding, not the commanded, Anc Marie sadly shook her head and announced, "Now he is mad, like his father".

Yet she was fond of him; she sent the boy at once, not for the doctor, but for the wise woman, who lived about three miles away. She said she'd come; but first she mumbled some incantations over Hans Christian, tied a woollen thread round his wrist, and laid a green leaf on his breast from "the tree of crucifixion", as she said. "But is my poor father going to die?" the boy sobbed. She weighed her words: "If he is, then you'll meet his fetch when you're going home along by the stream".

And she sent him off. His fright may be imagined. The only thought to which his terror-laden soul clung for comfort was that, as his father loved him so and knew how afraid he was of ghosts, he would not show himself that way.

"You didn't meet anything at all?" his mother asked when at last he was safe home again. "No, nothing at all", he assured her, his heart still hammering, and he begged her to send for a doctor. But with her innate fear and distrust of these expensive and unfamiliar beings, she delayed for yet a day, and then it

was too late. On the third day, Hans Andersen died in his thirty-fourth year.

His corpse lay behind the flowered calico curtains of the big bed, and the boy and his mother lay awake by it. A cricket cried the whole night long. "He is dead", the mother said to it; "you don't have to be calling him now, the ice-maid has taken him."

Hans Christian knew what she meant; he remembered that the winter before, when their windows had been frozen, and he had made peepholes on them with hot pennies, his father had shown them a figure on the pane resembling a woman with her arms outstretched. "I think she wants me", he had laughed.

Poor Ane Marie, when the neighbours pointed out to her three scratches on the corpse and suggested that the devil had marked him and taken him because he doubted satanic existence, she almost agreed with them, and was doubly desolate, while the horrible thought sank leadenly into the boy.

Hans Christian was the chief mourner behind the coffin, his hat wound in a mass of black crape. He sat in the cathedral, looking at the little gilt stars in the white vaults of the roof, and he cried, as he could cry, with a dissolution of his whole being in tears. Perhaps even now he began to understand the tragedy of his young father's life; the wings that had tugged and strained for flight and never been able to lift him away.

At home, the mother and son mingled their tears and lamentations. Only the old grandmother sat quiet; she did not even sigh, but her blue eyes were wet and the pain in the white face remained in the child's memory.

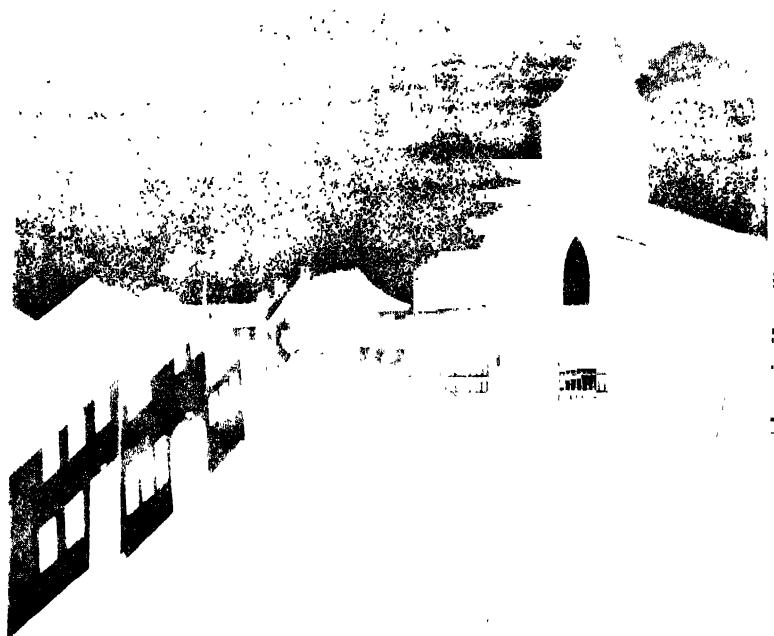
CHAPTER II

AT the time of his father's death, Hans Christian was eleven, already very tall for his age, gawky, with a mop of whitish blond hair, a big nose, and eyes so small and so hidden back under their brows that many thought he was blind. A grey coat that was too small and wooden shoes that were too big were the salient parts of his costume. On Sundays he wore shoes, but they had to be enormously too big, as "his foot was growing". Ane Marie went out the whole day to wash for people, and the boy was left very much to himself and his doll theatre; his reveries only interrupted by odd errand-boy jobs, and by going to school, though it would be incorrect to say that school interrupted his reveries.

He was now in a city school for poor children, situated in a picturesque old building, where the classroom walls were hung with cloth on which were painted scenes from the Bible. Hans Christian could sit and stare at these, and dream himself so thoroughly into them, that the voice of the teacher never penetrated to his attention. He was scolded then for being "away" again, but the teacher never hit him. Hans Christian did not know his lessons especially well, but this was due, as it quite often is, to his being too clever. He learned by heart with astonishing facility. There was a boy next door who read his lessons aloud from morning till night for all the world to hear; which made Ane Marie remark unwisely, "That's a stupid boy, he's always studying, and my Hans Christian never picks up a school-book, and yet he knows his lessons". Her boy needed to hear no more; after that he took a pride in getting his lessons on his way to school or between classes, and he managed to do it, but he never learned to spell.

He tried to tell the other children the stories in his head, of which he naturally was the hero, but it needed only a word from one of them about madness to make him silent on that score. Yet he was on friendly terms with all of them; he never in his childhood got into a fight with another boy. It must, however,

be admitted that this was perhaps more due to the swiftness of his legs for running, and the length of his arms for climbing, than to any forbearance on the part of the other boys, though they probably liked him well enough if he stuck to re-telling what he had read, and kept from trying to dazzle them with his day-



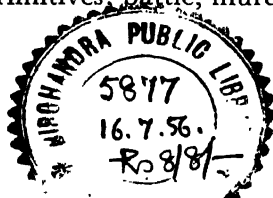
A SQUARE IN ODENSE

dreams. But Hans Christian was one of the odd children who instinctively prefer making friends with their elders. They are sensitive, imaginative, reaching out for sympathy and comprehension, and they shy away from their natural playmates, as most children are relentless conformists, hunting and fighting in herds. Perhaps the grown-ups will understand; at any rate they won't jeer so cruelly. Hans Christian already had a great

many friends among them; the old women in the hospital, the grocer's widow with the theatre programmes, the man with the handbills; and many others who felt attracted to a child who paid attention to them, listened to their stories and told them his, brought them his little presents of wild-flower wreaths, and berries on a straw. Whenever it was the teacher's birthday, Hans Christian arrived with a wreath and a poem, which the teacher sometimes thanked him for and sometimes laughed at, but this did not deter the boy, who knew that the teacher wrote hymns. The glory of authorship was thus so vivid around him that it seemed an honour even to be laughed at by a real poet.

He now knew the word; his ear, quick to catch every intonation, had heard it spoken as though it were something sacred. Near his home lived the widow and the old-maid sister of a pastor, who had written poetry, simple folk-songs. Hans Christian had heard plays spoken of in his home, but not verse. The two old ladies were attracted by the fatherless boy, or perhaps it would be more correct to say, that the boy whose father had been the only companion of his mind now felt the void and went roaming around to fill it. The fine tendrils waving in the air instinctively stopped here. It was the first cultivated home in which the boy had ever been, and one can imagine the reverence which thrilled him. "My brother, the poet", the old maid would say, her eyes shining. From her he learned that to be a poet was something splendid, something glorious. She liked him to read aloud and to sing for her, and their home became his while his mother was out.

In the house of the pastor's widow, Hans Christian met Shakespeare; not indeed the poet, for the translation was a poor one, but he met the grand and thrilling melodramatist. The vivid descriptions surged in his head, and the bold sanguinary happenings. He was haunted by the ghost in *Hamlet*, and he saw Lear raving on the heath. Immediately he performed the plays with his dolls' theatre, and the more of the characters died, the better he liked the play. There was no help for it; he must write a piece himself. It was, naturally, a tragedy. Children are not little fairies to be fed on mawkish honey-dew stories confectioned by sentimental elders, they are little primitives; battle, murder,



and sudden death are thrilling and amusing to them. As Hans Christian had just read three tragedies in which all the characters suffered violent death, he thought this was obligatory, and it gave him no little trouble. The subject he had from an old song; it was *Pyramus and Thisbe*; he disguised his indebtedness lightly in calling it *Abor and Elvira*. In the beginning, Elvira was expecting her Abor to meet her. As he did not come, she hung her pearl-necklace on a hedge to show she had been there, and strolled off for a walk. Abor came, believed her killed by a wild animal, and killed himself. Elvira then arrived up and was due to die, but since the piece only filled four pages so far, Hans Christian let a hermit come in who told Elvira that his son had fallen in love with her, and to touch the fair one's heart, the hermit spoke exclusively in Biblical quotations taken from a school-book. His son then came in and killed himself for love. Elvira followed his example, and the old hermit exclaimed, "Death I now perceive, all my limbs to cleave!" whereupon he too fell down.

Filled to the brim and running over with creative joy, Hans Christian had no lingering doubt but that everyone would wish to share the result with him. He never had; for better or for worse, the world was always invited to listen. *Abor and Elvira* was read up and down the street, and seems indeed to have met with nothing but kind words, and the praise that was such balm to him, but, and this too is characteristic, there was one single drop of acid, and it spoiled all the sweetness. Full of naïveté and self-satisfaction, he read it at last to the neighbour whose son was so slow at his lessons. She listened. When he had finished she made a joke. "Abor" in Danish is very like the word for a fish, the perch, and the good woman said, "It ought to be called Perch and Cod", instead of *Abor and Elvira*.

Hans Christian fell from the heights into corresponding depths; wildly sensitive to ridicule, she had touched the fatal spot, and there was now no joy in the universe. The woman was probably both ignorant and illiterate, and everyone else, including his new deities the pastor's widow and sister, had praised him, but it did not matter. He was brought down. It was a cold and of gravity. The coldly and unfavourable criticism, for her

exist. For Hans Christian very soon nothing else existed. He needed every suffrage, even the humblest, full of a deep nervous distrust of himself as he was. He covered it over, of course, with the energetic belief that he was destined to greatness, but criticism of any kind soon pierced through the belief, and he suffered.

This time he had his mother to go to, his shield against the world. Little as she shared his dramatic interests, she was well able to defend him against jealous neighbours. "She only says that because her son hasn't written it", was her dry comment when the despairing author came to her, and Hans Christian was consoled.

He was so consoled that he immediately wrote a new play. This time he moved in higher spheres, a king and a princess were to be among the characters. Shakespeare, to be sure, made royalty talk like other people, but as this did not seem quite right to him, he asked his mother and some of the neighbours how a king did talk.

No one seemed to know much about it; they said it was so long since a king had been in Odense, but to the best of their knowledge he had spoken in foreign languages; not such a bad guess, since he had been spoken at the court for a great many years. Hans Christian seized the idea in the plural, and got a pocket dictionary, with French, German, and English and their Danish translation. Now he was on his feet. The first spoken by the royal personages was a careful selection from these languages with a little Danish to cement them. "*Guten Morgen, mon pere, har De godt sleeping?*" was the Princess's question to her father in the best royal polyglot.

About this time he made a list of the plays which he intended to write, twenty-five of them, among which were such titles as "*The Evening Promenade*, or the Cook and the Count", "*The Zephyrus from Bagdad*"

The King was not attired in gold and silver, he wore a long blue cape with a red velvet collar.

Hans Christian returned to his own self-created royalty with great satisfaction. He made no exception, from the highest to the lowest; wherever there was an ear, he read the new play to it. He says himself that it never occurred to him that anyone would feel less happy about listening than he did about reading; and apparently his kindly friends did not undeceive him. Quite likely they enjoyed themselves, it being one thing to hear a grown-up read his absurd play, and another to hear an odd and eager boy.

There was certainly something about Hans Christian which people could not resist. They did not listen to him or lend him books, merely because he had the supernormal audacity to ask them to. People don't. It was the nature of the request. He asked them for a book; something which most boys plead to be delivered from. Hans Christian read everything he could lay hold of. As soon as he heard that people owned books, he presented himself at their door, whether he knew them or not, and convinced them that he must have a book, as a really hungry beggar convinces one he must have food. The entreaty in his pleasant voice and expressive face was all-conquering. A lady who found this unknown boy on her doorstep, and whom he magnetised into lending him a book, was so pleased with his care of it that she offered him the run of her whole collection.

Impossible really to understand what this meant to Hans Christian, unless one has been a child with the same fierce book-hunger, the same all-absorbing, quivering joy in getting it satisfied. There is so much that an imaginative child of eleven or twelve wants to know, and books seem so many gates to the world for him. Hans Christian knew the breathless pleasure of opening new ones, of living in many different worlds, and lives. He at last met Shakespeare the poet in a better translation, and now even Holberg was dethroned, not to mention the verses of the poor pastor. With his ability to learn by heart, he committed many scenes from the plays to memory, declaiming them sonorously in the little turf-shed by his home, but his taste does not seem to have been improved. When he saw an awful German melodrama, it pleased him so much that he acted it at home,

making up the German language as he went along, throwing his mother's apron over his shoulders for a knightly cape, and swimming on a footstool on the floor, like the heroine in the Danube.

This performance not unnaturally worried his mother, and she strictly forbade any more such nonsense, probably not forgetting to mention the madness and queerness of his grandfather and father. But Hans Christian was hopeless. When a troupe of acrobats and pantomime dancers came to Odense, he was inspired to dance a whole Harlequin pantomime for his mother. This frightened her into saying that she would apprentice him to the acrobats if he would not be sensible, and then they would beat him, and give him oil to make him supple enough to dance on a rope. Nothing daunted, he begged her to do it; he wanted very much to dance on a rope, and this drove her to the despairing and futile threat of a whipping.

Whether as a sequel to this, or because she was hard up, or for the reason she gave that she wanted to know where he was while she was out washing, Hans Christian was now sent to work in a cloth factory. His grandmother brought him to the gate, cried and kissed him, saying that this would never have happened if his father had been alive, she had not thought she would live to see him in such low company. Among the weavers were several rather rough fellows and the boy was frightened of them, and at the jokes he did not understand. But his desire to please stood him in good stead; when he was asked if he could sing, he needed no urging but sang away, declaiming some scenes from Shakespeare and Holberg for good measure. He made a great hit. All laughed and clapped and arranged to have some other boys do Hans Christian's work, keeping him for their entertainment. So he found the first few days at the factory very pleasant indeed, never having any objection to being the centre of benevolent attention. He had a pure, high boy soprano. But the day for work also came. He had to try to spin, and the thread would keep breaking. The weavers sang their own very coarse ditties, and Hans Christian knew well enough that there was something queer about them; he turned red as fire, and the weavers mocked him, saying that with a voice as high and clear as his, he was surely no boy but a little maid. Whereupon they held his arms

and legs and tried to investigate, but the boy wriggled screaming away, rushed home to his mother and begged to be let leave the factory.

Ane Marie then put him in a small tobacco factory, where there was only one journeyman and some decent boys. He was well treated, and here too his clear soprano was a great success; people used to come there to hear him sing, and since he invented his own involved text and melody, the listeners would nod their heads sagely and say, "He ought to go to the theatre", an idea which fell in fertile soil.

But the little tobacco interlude ceased when he fell ill again, as his mother thought the dust was bad for his chest. Very likely it was another convulsion of his unstable nerves. In any case, he was left to himself once more, and sought his old friend, the pastor's widow; he read aloud and was read to, made costumes for his action dolls under her direction, and showed his gratitude by making her a white satin pin-cushion. Another pastor's widow showed him kindness; she let him read aloud to her from loan-library novels. One of these began: "It was a stormy night, the rain drummed on the window-panes . . ." Here the lady interrupted: "That's a fine book!" The boy asked her how she knew. "I can tell by the way it begins", she said, "it will be a splendid book." And he regarded this wise person with a kind of awe.

Another casual job came his way. His mother took him with her to the country to do some hop-picking at a manor where she had once been in service. Hans Christian had been looking forward to this trip for years, and it came up even to his expectations. Grand house, grand things to eat, and grand stories. The hop-picking was done in a big barn by a number of the country-people, and stories were told of ghosts, devils, and omens by eye-witnesses well acquainted with all of these. One old farmer said that God knew everything which happened or which was going to happen, words that made a peculiarly deep impression on the boy. In the evening, as he was straying about alone, he came to a deep pond, and as he ventured out on one of the stones in the water, the strange thought suddenly came to him: I wonder does God really know what is going to happen; suppose He has decided that I am to live to be an old man, but suppose I now jump

into the water and drown myself, then things will not happen as He willed them. And instantly he was fully determined to drown himself; he turned to the pond's blackest depth—when a new idea pierced him: this is the devil who wants you in his power. He screamed and ran as fast as he could to the arms of his mother, who told the others that the boy must have seen something, very nearly persuading him that he had.

This seems to have been one of the last times that Hans Christian and his mother were close together. Her widowhood had lasted two years and she was tired of it. She married again when her son was about thirteen years of age. The new husband was also a shoemaker and also much younger than herself. His family thought the marriage beneath him and would allow neither Ane Marie nor her son into their house. It must have been a bitter time for Hans Christian. He had to share his mother's affections with a stranger, and to be reminded of their lowly station; he, the dramatist and protégé of people of quality, was not thought good enough to enter an artisan's house. It helped to fan his ambitions.

His stepfather was not unkind, he was negative. He washed his hands of Hans Christian; he would have nought to do with his upbringing, let him do as he please. It may be imagined how the boy felt when he came home and found his mother waiting on the stranger; he either lost himself in playing with his theatre or drifted out again. If ever the talk veered to him, it seems to have been on the subject of putting him to work, and as he was so fond of making costumes for his dolls, his mother believed him predestined to be a tailor. Hans Christian objected and said he was going to be an actor, and his mother countered with the familiar threat that actors were beaten and had to live on oil to make them supple; actors and acrobats were all one to her. No, a tailor, that was something different. Look at Master Steegman in the main street; he had big windows and journeymen on the table—if only her son could be one of them!

Hans Christian had long had other plans for himself, but should they miscarry, at least there was this about tailoring, that he would have all the coloured remnants he needed for his dolls' costumes.

But his interest in a certain branch of literature deepened.

On his book-hunts he sought especially for the lives of famous men, devouring them more eagerly if they had risen from poverty to fame. They mingled fantastically with his stock of fairy-tales. The hero went through all kinds of hardships before some kind person or fairy queen helped him to fame and wealth, but the help was sure to come. He was looking for it, watching for it, and from the drollest quarters. His family had moved to a new house which had a narrow strip of garden that led down to the stream across from the big water-mill. Hans Christian loved to watch the water being turned on and off the enormous wheel; he noted keenly everything in Nature, the fish left wriggling in the shallows, the fat water-rats, the flowers and the alders, and also the dreaded Nun's Hill across the way, but the running water kept him safe from the goblins. In the mill the floury millers ran to and fro, and country-people drove across the bridge. But in the summer evening, when the light dimmed and the bells rang from the near cathedral, Hans Christian sat at the end of the garden down by the stream and lived in his rich imagination. It found an outlet in song. He knew he had a high clear voice; he had often been told he would make his fortune by it, and he spent the evenings dreaming of his fortune and where it might come from. He had no small notions. An old woman, rinsing her laundry in the water, had once informed him that the Chinese Empire lay right under Odense river, and he saw no reason why, some such moonlit night as he sat there warbling, a Chinese prince might not suddenly dig himself through the earth and appear before him; he enchanted by his song, and carry him down to his empire with him, make him rich and noble, but of course permit him to visit Odense, where he intended to build a palace. He saw it all so vividly that he was able to sketch all the plans for it.

The Chinese prince with the habits of a mole never came to hear the songs Hans Christian improvised for him in the moonlight, but the good burgher who owned the large garden next door often brought his visitors down to listen behind the palings, and the boy knew it and was not averse. He began to be known as the little nightingale, and people of rank sent for him to sing in their drawing-rooms. Even the Bishop sent for him one night, and among the company there was a handsome colonel of

dragoons, Høgh-Guldberg by name, who looked at the prodigy with more than curiosity or amusement as he sang or declaimed.

Colonel Guldberg was not the ordinary military man: he was well educated, and he had imagination enough to see Hans Christian's genuine gifts. He brought him to his own home, treated him with understanding kindness, and tried to instil into him some sense of the importance of proper schooling. The thought of Latin and geometry could not compete in charm, however, with the Chinese princes or dazzling theatres that filled the boy's head, and he lent only half an ear to the suggestion of hard study as the right way to glory.

But he listened intently when the Colonel said he had secured an audience with the Prince Governor for him. He was to sing and to recite for the Prince, and if his Highness asked what he would like to be, he was to express his eagerness to prepare for the university.

Although the Prince was at the top of Odense society, and the boy at the bottom, there was no awe-inspiring gulf between them. Ane Marie sometimes worked for the housekeeper at the palace, and Hans Christian had played in the big courtyard when the Prince's little son would sometimes join the boys from town.

Still—an audience.

His heart beat as he wandered through the park in his Sunday best, and when he came near the steps to the fine austere building he hesitated. A big gaudy porter stood guard there, holding a long, silver-mounted stick. Hans Christian thought he could never summon up courage enough to pass him, yet at last he sidled past and reached the audience hall.

The Prince, a portly, fine-looking man with crisp curls and bright blue eyes, received him very graciously, amused by so young a supplicant. If he had thought that the little ragamuffin would be overcome by embarrassment, he was mistaken. Under such circumstances Hans Christian's self-possession never deserted him. He improvised songs and recited scenes from Holberg, declaiming them so fervently that the Prince asked if he aspired to the theatre. With fatal honesty, the boy eagerly admitted this, adding that he had been told to say he wanted to study, but his real desire was certainly for the theatre.

The future King Christian VIII, now, alas, Prince Governor of Fyn and no Chinese prince, answered with the purest common sense that it was one thing to recite a writer's words with feeling, another to have a real vocation for the theatre, and as for studying, this was long and costly. But there were many good respectable trades. Cabinet-making, for instance. If Hans Christian would like to take up cabinet-making, the Prince might help him to do that.

Hans Christian managed to bow and to be verbally grateful, but his Royal Highness can hardly have misread the boy's expression, and there were no more audiences.

Deeply disappointed, Hans Christian returned to his far more satisfactory dreams. Colonel Guldberg, too, must have been disappointed; at any rate, though he and others of his class continued to be friendly with the boy, they did nothing for his education. Later times, dowered with hind-sight, have blamed them for this, but one can understand that the task of disciplining Hans Christian's imagination must have seemed hopeless to them. He still believed in miracles and fairy-tales and not in hard work. They knew his background of insanity, poverty, and ill-health. They, like the Prince, were sensible people. At an evening's entertainment, the boy was undeniably amusing, his naïveté and self-confidence so charmingly mingled. They could fire a thousand questions at him, he would have an answer for each. He sang, heaven knows what he sang, but his stream of words passed for eloquence, his boldness for wit, and his poverty somehow stamped it all as genius. His pockets were stuffed with cakes and fruit, and a bright coin slipped into them too before he was sent home, drunk with delight at his own triumph.

But if in the morning the question came up of actually doing something for him, it was countered by "What could it lead to?" The boy had impossible ideas. With that rustic face and ungainly figure, to think of the theatre! Their common sense won. Odense let Hans Christian continue in the school for poor boys, where only religion, reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught, and not very well. His spelling was deplorable from ever afterwards. The rougher boys resented his oddity; he would keep telling them fantastic stories about himself, and he was unwise enough to mention being taken up by the quality. On

a day that he never forgot, he was chased through the streets by a whole wild gang screeching "Look at the playwright!" Safe in his home, he hid in a corner, cried and prayed.

But he was not really safe in his home. Deeply as his mother loved him, she was far from understanding the yearnings at work in him, and her new husband kept up a stream of unflattering comment on the crazy, lazy boy. And though he was young to be confirmed, this seemed to be the best way out, then he could be apprenticed to a tailor and be learning something useful.

These conversations as to his fate were probably going on while the subject of them was out at night being thrilled by the players from the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. They had come to Odense on tour, and were giving a varied romantic and operatic repertoire. Desire gave Hans Christian courage; he went straight to the actors and explained that he had no money, but that he must see the show, and there was nothing in the world he wanted so much as to take part in it. They listened. It was fatal to listen to Hans Christian. He was invited to come behind the scenes every night, and he was even given a part. He was to be the page in *Cendrillon*, who to be sure had only one word to say, but who wore red silk. Those nights he arrived at the playhouse before it was even opened; he donned the red silk, he spoke his word, and felt contentedly sure that every eye in the house was on him. He had no stage-fright. He was in his element. The world of unreality in which he always lived was simply extended around him.

But reality and confirmation arrived hand in hand. The children to be prepared for confirmation could theoretically attend either the Dean's class or the chaplain's class of the parish to which the Andersens belonged, but in practice only the children of the well-to-do attended the Dean's class, while the poorer sought the chaplain's. Hans Christian, with full knowledge of what he was doing, applied to the Dean and could not be refused.

He had various private reasons for this. The Dean's confirmees would stand at the top and the chaplain's at the bottom of the row on the church floor: that was the apparent motive. Hans Christian did not take naturally to the bottom. But there

was also the fear of the boys of his own class who had jeered him through the streets, and there was the magnetic attraction of the other boys who seemed to him to be of finer clay. Often he had watched these students from the Latin school as they played in the churchyard, and yearned to be among them: not for the games, he could entertain himself, but for the many books they had, and for their brilliant prospects in the world. If, as he had a right to, he joined their confirmation class, then he would be with them, and he felt they must be gentler and better than the boys he knew, they might be his friends.

But snobbishness is not notably absent from confirmation classes, and not one of the fine birds paid any attention to the ugly duckling. Instead he was made to feel, in the thousand little ways that nice children know, that he was an outsider, an intruder, who had pushed in where he did not belong. The Dean himself obviously disapproved of the lower orders trying to mix in; let them be confirmed in their Christianity all by themselves. He had a stern eye on Hans Christian. When he heard that the boy had been reciting scenes from Holberg at the apothecary's house, he scolded him severely. In this sacred period to be carrying on like that! He had better be perfect in his lessons or he would be expelled. The boy tried to explain his love for the theatre, perhaps he even thought it a good chance, but the Dean foamed at the mouth and told him he was talking sheer madness.

Frightened and depressed, he welcomed all the more one ray of friendliness. A girl, who unlike the others had always greeted him pleasantly, gave him a rose. That was enough to send him home in beatitude; there was someone who did not look down on him.

Easter came, and the great day when the community gathered in the high-vaulted cathedral to see its young pass through the ancient ritual of confirmation. Two rows of boys and girls, scrubbed down to the pink, hair fine-tooth-combed, sleekly yellow. Stiff, wide-eyed solemnity. Pews crammed with tearful relatives. Ane Marie no doubt in her sprigged calico, watching Hans Christian, ready to rise when the question should be put to him as to whether he forsook the devil and all his works. Hans Christian so filled with conflicting emotions that he was like to

burst. A brown coat of his father's had been made into a suit for him; never had he worn anything so elegant; a white shirt frill too, and his first pair of new boots. Dreadful dilemma of wanting to show both long trousers and long boots. Boots won, and he pulled the shafts up over the trousers for everyone to admire. When they publicly proved their newness by creaking as he went up the church floor, and he realised that the whole congregation could hear it, he thrilled with pleasure, but with pain too, for his devotion was sadly cut into, and his conscience reproached him cruelly for giving the boots the thoughts that belonged to the good Lord. From the depths of his heart he begged forgiveness, and then he thought of the boots again.

The pastor wrote in the church register that Hans Christian Andersen had good ability generally, and a good knowledge of religion, and though he could not be especially commended for industry, yet there was nought for which to blame him.

Confirmation did not bring him a great crop of presents, but there must have been more coins to slip into the clay-pig, which is the traditional savings-bank of Danish children. Confirmation, however, brought him right up against the problem of what he was going to be. No help for it now; his mother said he must be a tailor. But Hans Christian now revealed the plan he had been hatching for so long: he wanted to go to the great city of Copenhagen to try his luck there. What did he think that might lead to? Ane Marie asked in consternation. Her son had a simple programme. "I am going to be famous", he announced, and explained about all the remarkable people whose biographies he had read. "First you suffer the most awful things, and *then* you get to be famous."

He particularised that he intended to be an actor, which far from reassuring his mother. She brought out the old bogies of rope-dancing, oil-diet, beatings, and lack of respectability, while Hans Christian sobbed and persisted. He reminded her of what his father had said: "No matter what the boy wants to be; if it were the silliest thing in the world, let him have his way".

Ane Marie was impressed. Quickly Hans Christian followed this up by reminding her of what the old fortune-teller had predicted, that he would become a great man and that some day the whole town of Odense would be illuminated in his honour.

She gave in, but not without consulting another fortune-teller, who found the coffee-grounds not unfavourable. Ane Marie believed in the gods of luck; she had no experience of the world whatever outside her own little island, and besides it was not very easy for her to keep the boy at home. She had done her best to give him an honest start in life; if he would not take it, well then, he would have to leave the nest somehow. Life was not very easy for Ane Marie. Rheumatism and eye trouble bothered her. Worse than that, the new husband had turned out to be a sour and lazy fellow, who had apparently thought it would not be a bad idea to have a fine sturdy woman working for him. Instead of doing a little washing to help out the family income, she found she was expected to provide the whole of the income. All day she stood at the stones of her washing-place by the stream, ankle-deep in the cold water, rinsing the clothes. From believing in juniper drops well shaken in brandy as a remedy for ills, she came to believe in unadmixed brandy against the cold weariness of her work. Hans Christian had had to bring her the bottle, and he had heard what the neighbours said about it too. He had several reasons for not wanting to stay in Odense.

The neighbours had their say of course about his plan for going to Copenhagen; indeed everyone who heard of it came to Ane Marie and told her how mad it was, how really terrible, to think of letting Hans Christian, who was only fourteen and such a child, run away to the capital, so bewilderingly big and so far off. She could only wail that there was no doing anything with the boy; he left her no peace at all, she had to give him leave. But it did not matter; when he came to cross the water he'd surely be frightened and turn back, and then she'd apprentice him to a tailor.

The old grandmother, who now came very rarely but who arrived for these family councils, sighed and shook her head. "We ought to try to get him into an office. There's something genteel about that, and that's what Hans Christian has a mind to."

"If he could be a tailor like Master Steegman, I wouldn't ask for anything more genteel," said Ane Marie, "but let him go away now, as far as Nyborg." Nyborg was the port, and she counted on the effect of the water.

Hans Christian did not, however, take his hat and leave then

and there. He was not completely crazy. He had a sound feeling for the importance of personal connections. A real actress had recently come to Odense, and the local dramatic society was going to assist her in a performance. Needless to say, Hans Christian had a friend in this society, who had often taken him behind the scenes, and when this friend told him about the arrival of the actress, the boy lost no time in going to see her. He regarded her already as a sister in the arts, and probably told her so. She was friendly; there were few who could resist Hans Christian bent on pleasing, and he got a small part in the performance. Every day he called on the lady, who calmly used him to send love-letters by. He suspected nothing until he actually witnessed her frivolous conduct, and cried over it before her, and got well laughed at. But he could not leave her. When she had heard of his plan for going to Copenhagen she had offered to let him travel there with her for nothing, and to recommend him to a dancer at the Royal Theatre. Ane Marie was so pleased with this that she went and thanked her, offering to do her washing free. But week after week slipped by; a whole month, and she was still doing the washing. The actress was so thoroughly in debt that she could not leave Odense.

Ane Marie was tired. No doubt her husband made life unbearable for her with his constant nagging about the boy. And so she said to Hans Christian, "If you're going to go away, then you must go now!" He agreed. There was nothing to be expected from the actress. He would have to go alone out into the big world, just like the heroes in the fairy-tales. He savoured the thrill of the situation, but it really left him quite calm. It always turned out right in the stories.

He took down his savings-bank, the clay-pig, from the chest of drawers. The clay-pig does not yield up its insides unless you break it, and the moment was solemn. There was the pain of slaughtering an old friend, and then there was great joy. Among the ruins of the pig lay coins to the value of thirteen *rigsdaler* (about one pound, eight shillings). He had never seen so much money in his life, riches and happiness were his.

But the neighbours as usual cried calamity and refused to be impressed. "Don't you know anybody at all in Copenhagen?" they asked when he told them he was going now. "Nobody at

all", he answered, and they prophesied sure disaster unless he could get at least one letter of introduction to someone in Copenhagen.

He realised they were right, but who was to give it to him? Colonel Guldberg and his family were not at home, they were scattered in Norway and other places; he knew no one to ask. But lack of acquaintance was never an obstacle to him very long. He had heard that when the players from the Royal Theatre were in Odense they used to visit one of its leading citizens, a printer by the name of Iversen. He had also heard that there was a form of art known as the ballet which surpassed even plays and opera, and that the most influential person at the ballet was a Madame Schall. She at once became a sort of fairy queen to him, and what more simple than to beg the printer for an introduction to her?

Along one side of Odense canal Iversen had a country-place with a large park-like garden. The high-road was on the other side of the canal, and Hans Christian had often stood there, gazing over at the curious ornaments, a battery with wooden cannons and a wooden grenadier in a sentry-box behind drums and rifles. It was a fairyland to his imagination, and there was something fitting in his going to the owner of it for an introduction to the other fairyland, Copenhagen.

The old man, who saw the long gawky boy for the first time, listened to him in the kindest way, and told him, also in the kindest way, that what he was thinking of doing was the sheerest folly. It could never lead to anything. It was not sensible. "What you ought to do is to learn a trade", he finished.

"That would really be a great sin!" the boy burst out, and there was something in the burning conviction with which he said it that made the old man look at him, startled. He had come under the spell. Although he did not personally know the dancer, Madame Schall, he gave him the coveted letter to her, and Hans Christian saw the gates of fortune open.

Now it was settled, Ane Marie spoke to the postilion about letting her son come along as a kind of stowaway, getting on outside the town where the authorities would not be looking. He agreed to this, and thus the trip would cost only three *rigsdaler*.

Ane Marie packed his little bundle of clothes together and followed her boy to the city gates. There stood the old grandmother, tears in her gentle blue eyes; she hugged him, but said nothing; he never saw her again.

His mother peered into the mail-coach; she knew none of the passengers, except one woman, by sight. Weeping, she asked her to look to the boy a little on the journey, and bade Hans Christian farewell.

It was a golden afternoon early in September 1819. The postilion blew his melodious horn, an unfamiliar landscape began to slide past, and Hans Christian's tears began to dry, only flowing now and then, perhaps, if he saw the cathedral tower above its green garden and the little clustering houses. He was only fourteen and a child for his age. He was rolling into a new world, towards fancied marvels, towards the goal of his desires; the sun was shining, and he had ten *rigsdaler* in his pocket. The excitement of novelty carried him through, even when he came to the sea, where the schooner waited for passengers and the water glittered greenish blue. The strong salty air buoyed him up. But when the sails and the swooping gulls flapped overhead and the woods and tender slopes of Fyn began to recede long before the other shore was even visible, fear squeezed his heart. The sun had set. They were nearly all night in the creaking ship. It was a frightened boy who saw the low red-tiled roofs of Korsør appear in the haze of dawn. But if he had no mother here, no pastor's widow, no kind teacher, no colonel of dragoons, yet he had a personal connection with a greater patron. His first steps after landing were towards a wooden shed on the beach, behind which he fell on his knees, and with fervent tears, but as a matter of course, begged for divine protection. God was his friend, his heavenly Father, who only differed from Hans Andersen, the cobbler, in having ever so much more to let him have his own way in. Secure in this, and in the police passport, which he had got before leaving Odense and which requested all and sundry to let H. C. Andersen pass unhindered on his journey to Copenhagen, he got into the yellow mail-coach and started on the day-and-night drive across the island of Sjælland.

CHAPTER III

No one who knew Hans Christian would have supposed that he could travel the twenty-odd hours to Copenhagen in silence and without getting acquainted with his fellow-passengers. Nor did he. The woman to whom his mother had commended him soon received his confidence and the story of his life and his plans for the future, as they were bumping along the roads or eating their sandwiches while the horses were being changed. She was a kindly soul who had been a wet-nurse in Odense; she was now returning to Copenhagen; it did not seem out of her rôle to concern herself about Hans Christian, and she gave him her address in the city.

Morning came, Monday the 6th of September 1819. Across a level plain, in the early blueness, Copenhagen began to be visible; but it was not until they reached the hill of Frederiksberg, and Hans Christian left the mail-coach to complete the rest of the journey on foot, that he really saw the beauty of its fanciful spires and towers, set in green ramparts, backed by the blue Sound. It did not surprise him. Had it been a city of white marble with golden roofs, it would not have been more than his expectations.

With his little bundle under his arm, he walked first through the noble park around the palace of Frederiksberg, then down the fine avenue of faintly yellowing linden trees, then through a half-built-up suburb, and at last he stood before the western gate of Copenhagen.

A hundred years ago, the city was still contained within its broad tree-clad ramparts, where windmills turned here and there. It was entered decently and ceremoniously through four great gates in the ramparts, guarded by customs officers and by soldiers in charge of a sergeant whose duty it was to obtain the list of passengers arriving in every mail-coach. The King liked to get it, so that he could see who was visiting the city. Twelve o'clock at night the gates were closed and locked and the keys brought to the King, who was said to put them under his pillow.

A watchman remained at one gate, and if any straggler desired to enter after midnight he had to go around to it and parley and pay to get in.

All this would have seemed quite in order to Hans Christian, especially that the King should want to be notified of his arrival. He paused a minute before the western gate and allowed himself the luxury of realising that now he was entering Copenhagen.

Some of his fellow-passengers had mentioned an inn quite



THE WESTERN GATE OF COPENHAGEN, 1809. NOW THE CITY HALL SQUARE

close to the gate, and there he brought his little bundle. But he did not stop except to deliver his passport. He was going to see whatever there was to see, especially of course the goal of his ambition, the Royal Theatre. He was not unreasonable. Some troubles and trials he expected there would be, but his faith in God's patronage was firm, and he was determined not to worry but to enjoy his first day in town.

He had not taken many steps away from the inn before he was struck by the height of the houses, four, five, even six stories, and by the crowds of quickly moving people. He could hardly make his way along the street; they were swarming noisily over the

whole of it, working-men, their wives, aproned apprentices and maids, swaying in excited masses. Above the general noise there were loud songs and shrill cat-calls, and then suddenly a tinkle of broken windows, after which there would be a sudden hush and then greater confusion than ever, because soldiers on horse-back came charging through the mob. Hans Christian thought they must be couriers dashing to the King's summer palace with despatches. The whole scene quite corresponded to what he had imagined life must be like in the capital; no provincial stodginess here, but a glorious animation which at first exhilarated him and then made him feel sad, because he was so very much alone in the midst of it all.

He complimented Copenhagen a little too soon. He happened to have arrived in the midst of an anti-Jewish riot that had started the day before. Throughout Europe, but especially in Germany, the Jews had been persecuted in this period, and the edge of the wave had reached Denmark. The riot spent itself mainly in the breaking of the new big shop windows which Jewish merchants had introduced; and then the Government got it well in hand, severely punishing the culprits and giving the Jews full civic rights.

Of all this Hans Christian was serenely innocent. As he expected, his new abode was humming like a beehive, and that was as it should be, though the crowds were inconvenient. He had to ask some flower-women where the Royal Theatre was, and they showed him how to get there.

The dignified eighteenth-century building lay at one end of a large, handsome open space, the King's Newmarket, where there was much to see, but for the moment he saw only the theatre. Several times he walked around it, looking at the dear walls, and thinking of it as his real home which merely happened to be closed. He prayed God to be sure to see to it that he became a good actor.

As he paced thus religiously around, a grimy fellow came up to him and asked if he wanted a ticket for the play. Delighted with the customs of Copenhagen, Hans Christian thanked the man most heartily and said he would gladly accept a ticket. The man then enumerated different seats and inquired which he preferred. Hans Christian politely and gratefully said that of

course he would leave it to him; whatever seat he was kind enough to give him, he would be glad to have. Whereupon the ticket-sharper called him a long gawk and furiously asked if he thought he could make a fool of him, until Hans Christian, deeply terrified, ran away.

The next day, he decided, would be devoted to the making of his fortune. In his little bundle he had his confirmation clothes, the brown frock-coat, which the old sempstress had made out of his father's, the big white shirt frill, and an enormous hat that almost came down over his eyes. He put them all on most carefully. Nor were the long boots forgotten, they were duly pulled up over the trousers. He felt very elegant as he wandered along to present his one and only letter of introduction, the one which the old printer had given him to the dancer, Madame Schall. He found the house where she lived and went upstairs to her flat. But before he pulled the bell-rope, he fell on his knees, and invited God to grant that here he might find help and protection. Just then a maid with a market-basket on her arm came running up the stairs; she threw him a kindly smile and a small coin, and hopped along. He looked at her, he looked at the coin. Wearing his grand clothes as he was, and looking so stylish, how could she think him a beggar? He called to her that he was not. "Keep it, keep it!" she shouted down to him and was gone.

He pulled the bell. But he had come very early. The dancer did not have Odense habits of rising. He had to wait hours on the landing before he was admitted to her presence.

Madame Schall was a serious artist, deservedly famous both for beauty and ability. She looked with something like alarm at the curious quivering apparition before her, whose letter of introduction meant nothing to her, as she had never even heard of the old printer in Odense. The tall, thin, awkward boy in the clumsy brown frock-coat told her of his love for the theatre in burning words, and, finding him more than a little queer, she thought it best to humour him. Had he a talent for the stage, she asked, and what parts did he feel he could play?

Hans Christian had no objection to proving his talent. "I can play you a scene from *Cendrillon*", he answered; "I love that play!" He had seen it twice performed in Odense by the Royal

Players, and, as Madame Schall was a woman and a dancer, he thought it only fitting that he take the part of the heroine where she dances with a tambourine.

While the lady watched, wondering if she ought to call for help, he pulled off his long boots and set them neatly in a corner, explaining that he could dance better in his stocking-feet.

Then he took off the big hat, and, using it as a tambourine, danced the whole scene for her, making strange wild gestures, improvising both the song and the music, as he knew neither.

But the applause that, as a wonder child, he had been used to in Odense was not forthcoming. In Copenhagen they did not know that he was only fourteen and a half, and young for his age. The lady sat on the horsehair

sofa, as cold and comfortless as it, and refused to offer him any hope. Tears rolling down his cheeks, Hans Christian pulled on his boots and told her again of his great love for the theatre. He said he would gladly run all her errands (he remembered that actresses seemed to need errand boys), he would put up with anything at all, if only she would help him!

Madame Schall was over forty and a sensible woman; she did not need an errand boy. Still, she was touched by the long thin lad's despair, and she said he might eat his dinner at her house, once in a while. She even went so far as to murmur that she would speak to the head of the ballet, to see if there might be an opening, but Hans Christian sensed she was merely trying to get rid of him, and went sadly away.



THE DANCER, MADAME SCHALL

He had thought it would all be so different, in spite of his theoretic knowledge of great men's initial adversities.

Yet he had one more little card to play. Iversen, the kind old printer of Odense, knew well enough that his letter of introduction to Madame Schall would do no good, and he had advised Hans Christian to call on Professor Rahbek, one of the directors of the Royal Theatre; in fact, Iversen said he had written Rahbek a note about him.

So Hans Christian wandered back, out through the western gate; and along the stately avenue to Frederiksberg, where his new hope lived.

Rahbek was a Professor of Aesthetics who had written endless tomes about literature, and he was also a great devotee of the theatre, but when literature and drama walked into his house, in a brown country coat and with a hat that was too big, he was not interested. He probably thought Hans Christian's lanky, weepy, fervent person extremely unaesthetic, and the drama of his arrival in Copenhagen a mere silly escapade. In any case, all he had to say in response to the trembling supplicant was that the person who decided these matters was the Chief Director of the Royal Theatre, Count Holstein.

With this information, Hans Christian left, and walked back the two or three miles to the inn. It had been a long day, he was tired, and it was too late to see the Chief Director.

The next day he donned the confirmation clothes, and, oblivious of the scattered rioting still going on, set off for the theatre. He had no doubt but that the great man would receive him, for he knew that his protector, Colonel Guldberg, had once mentioned him in a letter to the Count.

He was, in fact, admitted to the Chief Director, but the reception was anything but encouraging. Hardly had Holstein laid eyes on Hans Christian before he told him that he was much too thin for the theatre.

The boy's courage had re-arisen with the new day, and he answered gaily, "Oh, if you will only take me on and give me a hundred *rigsdaler* in salary, I shall fatten up soon enough!"

The Count frowned. Stronger medicine was apparently needed. "You have no figure at all. You would be ridiculous

on the stage. And the theatre accepts only cultivated young persons."

Hans Christian's gaiety left him. He would have liked to rush out, but this was his last chance, so he besought the Chief Director to allow him to join the ballet. Impossible, was the answer, pupils joined the ballet school only in May, and even then it would do him no good as he could not draw a salary until he was trained.

The audience was over.

Hans Christian stood again in the great square before the theatre. Heavens above! In May! This was September. And his riches, the wealth of the clay-pig at home, had already dwindled to a few coins. Had God deserted him? Was there no one in the whole city who could help?

There was only Mrs. Hermansen, the wet-nurse he had travelled in the mail-coach with. He had her address, he would ask her advice.

"Take the first ship back to Odense", was the sensible woman's advice, but it fell like a funeral bell on Hans Christian's ear. Never! He left her, strayed back to the square, looked at the ships that lay in the canal at one side of it, the hardy little schooners that brought fruit and vegetables to the city from all the islands, and one of which might take a passenger back cheaply.

Go back. He looked at the deep greenish-black water of the canal. Better die, he thought. What would the neighbours say if he turned up again after a week! Far better die than to go back and writhe under the jeering laughter that would overwhelm him if this were the end of his high-flying dreams.

He collapsed on one of the benches in the square, not the first nor the last whom they had supported in that mood. The real choking feeling of loneliness overcame him. He had no one to go to now for help; he had no one to go to for comfort or encouragement. He became all child. If his father had only known! If his mother— -! His face was convulsed in tears under the big hat. The many people so indifferently hurrying around him made it much worse. But the thought of God, his Heavenly Father, came to solace him, to Him he clung once more. When all went wrong, then God came to the rescue; he had read that.

And first one had to suffer so terribly, and then one became somebody, somebody famous. Now the tears were not bitter, but comforting, and he cried his fill. He felt better. He lifted his head, shoved back the hat, and looked at the theatre across the way.

A poster was up, announcing a play. He went over to look at it. It was *Paul and Virginia*. He consulted his purse. The coins were so few, so few—but—he bought a gallery ticket for that evening. Three o'clock in the afternoon saw him in line at the door, but even so he only succeeded in getting into the second row. However, he was in, and he was tall enough to see everything, in fact he saw so well that he completely forgot his grief, his lonely plight; he lived in the life he saw on the stage. He suddenly felt that *he* was Paul, and that the theatre was his Virginia, and when in the second act Paul was torn from his beloved Virginia, poor Hans Christian burst into sobs, because it was all so like his own fate; they wanted to tear him from his only beloved, the theatre.

His violent sobs attracted the attention of a couple of decent housewives next him. They tried to console him by saying that he must not feel so badly; it was nothing but play-acting, not real at all, and one of them gave him a large brawn sandwich. They spoke so kindly to him, he thought them such nice people, everyone leaned towards him in such a friendly way while he was munching the welcome sandwich, that he confided to the whole gallery box he was not really crying for Paul and Virginia, but because the theatre was his Virginia from whom he had to part. He told them who he was, and how he had come to Copenhagen, and how terrible it was that he could not be engaged at the theatre but had to be as unhappy as Paul. And his listeners whispered to each other, and gave him more sandwiches and fruit and cake.

But as he had suffered with Paul and Virginia, so was he elated with them. The happy ending of the play gave him renewed courage; it was impossible that his troubles would not end equally well. The world was still kind.

The next day, escorted by courage and hope, he re-attacked Madame Schall, and even Count Holstein, but the interviews were brief and left hope nearly dead.

Courage, however, was still intact, and his resolution firm that whatever he did, he would not return to Odense. He paid his bill at the inn, which left him one *rigsdaler*. Now he became practical. If I go home, he thought, I shall be apprenticed to some trade; why not apprentice myself here in Copenhagen? Then when I am a journeyman in six or seven years, I shall be fat enough for the theatre. What trade he chose did not matter; he disliked them all equally. Armed with this resolution, he sought Mrs. Hermansen, his former travelling companion, once more, who not only promised him temporary bed and board, but went with him to buy a newspaper, not a casual matter in those days. They read the advertisements and found that a certain carpenter needed an apprentice. Hans Christian sought him out.

The man was well-to-do and pleasant. Although he said he must have certificates of good behaviour from Odense, he waived these for the present, and said that since Hans Christian had no money he might come to live in his house at once, to see how he liked the trade. He was to be apprenticed for nine years, all found. Next morning at six o'clock he came to the carpenter shop. The master had not yet appeared, and the journeymen and the other apprentices were indulging in the kind of talk that made Hans Christian blush, which of course greatly rejoiced them. They had got a new target, and used it. During the day he had to help deliver some chairs, and to whom but to the Dean who had confirmed him! The wife knew him and greeted him in a kindly way, but the sight of her revived the memory of the fair dreams he had had when last he saw her, and he wandered back in deep dejection. When the coarse jokes in the carpenter shop continued to assault his sensitiveness and reminded him of the Odense factory, he went to see the master and to tell him he did not feel able for the trade. The good man tried to comfort and encourage the boy, but in vain.

Hans Christian had a new plan. He *was* going to get on a ship, because he was sure it would get wrecked and that the Lord would thus solve his problem. Meanwhile he took a room for the night in the inn near the western gate. In his room, he fell on his knees to pray. It dawned on him that possibly the Lord would not wreck the ship just for his sake, and that hence the

terror of going back to the smiles of Odense loomed certain before him.

He besought God for help. God could do it, and Hans Christian nicely reminded Him that he had never done anything wicked enough to bar him from grace.

As if in answer, he suddenly thought of his voice, his voice which everyone in Odense had praised. No one at the theatre had given it a hearing. In Odense he had once seen a newspaper in which it said that Siboni, an Italian, had been made head of the Royal Theatre's singing school. Perhaps he would aid him; if he would not, then there was no help for it, that very evening he must find a skipper with whom he could sail home. Home! His poor mother whom he couldn't help there. His nagging stepfather. The neighbours. The jeers. Still trembling with the suffering of these thoughts, he rushed out to find Siboni.

He found the house. An Italian was a rarity in Copenhagen. He knelt on the stairs and prayed for protection, terribly afraid the while that someone would open the door and see him in that posture. Then he rang the bell. The housekeeper came out and tried to get rid of him by telling him that Siboni was having a dinner party. It was about four in the afternoon and what she said was quite true, people dined at that hour. Hans Christian did not insist, but he told the housekeeper not only his errand, but the whole story of his life, told it with all the fire and tears of his desperate mood. She listened, forgetting her pots, absorbed and pitying. She told him to wait. He waited long enough for her to have time to retell the tale, and then she returned, the whole dinner party crowding out on the landing with her. They gazed at him, and he looked back, half-trembling, half-crying. They were artists, composers, poets, not sensible people. The handsome, impulsive Siboni dragged him into the room where the piano stood; he asked Hans Christian to sing and listened attentively. Then the boy recited scenes from Holberg, and a couple of poems, sad poems, in which the sense of his own unhappy state so overwhelmed him that he burst into real tears, and the whole company applauded him.

The witty poet, Baggesen, took him by the hand. "Aren't you afraid of critics?" he smiled, but Hans Christian looked uncomprehendingly at him. Baggesen grew serious. "I foresee", he

said, "that this boy will become a great singer, but don't get vain when the public applauds you." And then he said something which the boy only half-caught about sheer true naturalness, and how it got lost with the years and among other people. But, like a homeless dog suddenly picked up and frantically wagging its tail at everyone in the family circle, Hans Christian radiated at his new friends. Siboni, the master, spoke; it was in German, it was translated; he said he would train the boy's voice himself and probably he could be engaged later as a singer at the Royal Theatre. Professor Weyse, the famous composer, smiled so nicely at him, and shook his hand. In pure happiness Hans Christian melted into both laughter and tears. When the housekeeper let him out and saw the emotion he was in, she patted his cheek in a motherly way, while he begged her to tell him, did she think he would be made a singer and draw a salary, because he had only about seven pennies left. That she could not tell him, but she advised him strongly to go and see Professor Weyse the next day; he was the one who had spoken with the greatest kindness about him, and he was a man you could depend on.

The housekeeper knew what she was talking about. When Hans Christian the next morning appeared at Professor Weyse's, he found that the kind man with the sensitive face, who himself had been a poor lad, had wisely used the emotion of the artists to collect some money from them. There was a sum of seventy *rigsdaler* for Hans Christian, and there was a promise from Siboni that if the boy could learn enough German, he would give him singing lessons and let him have his meals at the house. Weyse counselled him to get lodgings with some decent people, and every month he could get ten *rigsdaler* of the seventy from him.

Hans Christian left the house almost insane with joy. On the stairs, making sure he was alone, he kissed his hand and lifted it towards heaven to bring God the gratitude his heart was brimming over with. Now he believed that his dreams and hopes would be fulfilled; the Lord had not forsaken him, the time of trials was past, and he had not yet been a week in Copenhagen. He was not surprised, however; this was precisely how he had imagined it; did not the hero always conquer at the end of the story?

He had never seen so much money, much less owned it, and now he wrote his first letter home. Jubilantly, exultantly, he described how all the luck in the world had come his way, how rich he was, and how happy. Ane Marie, who had passed some bad days when Hans Christian did *not* return after seeing the water, showed the letter to everybody with prideful joy. Some listened in real amazement, and others faintly jeered—what could it all lead to!

Meanwhile the young Aladdin had to find lodgings with some decent people. They had to be cheap. He consulted Mrs Hermansen, his now old friend from the mail-coach, and though she herself had no room, yet she knew of someone in her street who wanted a lodger. It is to be hoped she did not really know into what port she was steering Hans Christian. The woman who took him as a lodger was apparently a decent widow. But in the particular end of the dark and narrow street where she lived, all the windows seemed to be occupied by plump, blond, very red-cheeked ladies, who, to the boy's surprise, greeted him very tenderly although he did not know them. They were not unlike the aunt, his mother's sister, who had once come to see them in Odense and against whom Ane Marie had been so violent. Hans Christian could not believe that people really bore grudges, and when by accident he learned that this aunt lived quite near, he went to see her. He was pleased to find that she lived in some style, and that she was not angry with him. But there was a gorgeous lady present to whom she railed against his mother, calling her countrified, coarse, rough. "And now, after having treated me so badly she saddles me with her child, and that a boy! If at least it had been a girl——!"

A strange gentleman now came in, and the aunt whispered to Hans Christian that this was the young lady's betrothed, and they had better go up to the attic. Up there she told him she was not really so well off, still he might visit her once in a while. Hans Christian never tried to see her again—he could not, she had said such things about his mother; and when he told his landlady about the visit she had warned him very primly against further acquaintance.

Hans Christian indeed had no time to go visiting, nor to stay much in the windowless cubicle, really a larder, which was his

room. From morning till night, he was at Siboni's house, except during the few hours a week when he was studying German. The excellent Mrs. Hermansen had unearthed a teacher who gave him free lessons, and he soon learned enough phrases to understand some of Siboni's Italian-German-Danish. He had permission to be present when *il maestro* was instructing the opera singers. When the great man was annoyed and the blood shot up angrily in his cheeks while he stormed in three languages, Hans Christian trembled in every limb, though it did not concern him. But he thought his future depended on Siboni, and he regarded him with real awe. When his turn came and he had to sing a few scales, tears came to his eyes and his voice quavered. But the big noisy Italian was good-hearted. "Not afraid you!" he would say in broken Danish, and when the torture was over and Hans Christian let go, Siboni would often call him back and slip him some money; "for a little fun", he said, with a glowing smile.

The rest of the day the boy spent in the kitchen, helping the maids, opening the door, running their errands, listening to their stories and without any doubt telling them his. He was eagerly helpful and they liked him very much. But one day when he was sent in to bring a dish to the table, Siboni rose, marched into the kitchen and observed that the lad was not a waiter. After that he spent a little more time in the drawing-room, sometimes serving as model for the gay young Italian niece, who used to sketch him, wearing *il maestro's* voluminous Roman toga, while she looked at him, laughing to high heaven.

Spring was approaching, and his fifteenth birthday, and an unforeseen misfortune. The winter had been hard, his shoes were thin, his feet had been wet nearly every day, constant colds had nearly ruined his high clear voice. Added to this was the fact that it was changing.

One sad day in May, Siboni called him in and told him frankly that there was now no prospect of his becoming a singer: not only was it uncertain whether his voice would ever return, but his whole long, thin ungainly person was against him; his clumsiness, and his lack of education most of all. As for his dream of becoming an actor in the Royal Theatre, three or four years at least would be needed to bring him up to the

necessary standard of culture, and Siboni could not board him for so long. Now that summer was coming, why not return to Odense, and be apprenticed to a trade. Why not face facts, he urged with Latin realism.

The half-year of illusion was over. Copenhagen had agreed with what Odense had always told him, that his body was too absurd, that he was too ugly to win to his ideal. He staggered under the truth of it; he probably cried. But in real emergencies he never stopped at tears; he ran his fingers over every string he could pull. If hateful apprenticeship it had to be, let it be in Copenhagen. Return to Odense after the triumphant letter, which his mother had shown to all the neighbours! Never!

Death, God, noble friends, he ran through his scale of refuges, and chose the last. He went to Professor Weyse and begged for aid in getting apprenticed to a watchmaker; but hardly had he had this idea before he cancelled it for another. It was now the month of May, and he remembered that in May the ballet school accepted pupils. A new hope sustained him, incredible though it seems that the lanky, awkward Hans Christian could fancy himself pirouetting with that rejected body of his. But for the ballet, he reasoned, neither voice nor education was necessary. As for his appearance, he was loth to believe that it could not be improved by a little fat on his bones. Neither were all ballet dancers beauties. But how to get the fat? How to get money enough to live on while he was a pupil at the ballet? With the practicality at the core of him, he decided to see about this even before he sought admission. But whom to approach? He did not like to bother the group which had helped him, thinking he was to be a singer. Who else was there? He considered his Odense patrons. Colonel Guldberg had a brother in Copenhagen, a poet, Professor Guldberg. Should he go to see him? He felt unusually embarrassed: his failure with Siboni was so recent. He decided to write, and in a letter he expressed his need and his desire. The way thus prepared, he donned the well-worn confirmation clothes, and went to call on Guldberg, whom he found in a room full of books and long tobacco-pipes, a big, fine-looking man like his brother, the Colonel, and like him, simple, cordial, and sympathetic.

He was impressed, as nearly everyone was, by Hans Chris-

tian's direct and unaffected way of explaining his problem, and by his pure, unspoiled, eager being.

Yes, he had heard of him from the Colonel. Yes, he thought he could collect a little money for him, and as the letter had shown that some instruction in Danish might be needed, he would give him lessons in it, also in German. If he wanted to be an actor, he must study languages. He would speak to an actor he knew about admitting him to his class in acting. Meanwhile the ballet school might be possible, and he gave Hans Christian some needed clothes.

Hans Christian loved nice clothes; he hurried home and put them on, as part of his campaign; they were only a little too big. Then he combed his long locks romantically over his cheeks and went to see Dahlén, a solo dancer, who had a dancing-school in connection with the Royal Theatre. Dahlén succumbed to the charm and eloquence of the odd apparition, and, against his better judgment, admitted him to his school.

Hans Christian rushed back to Guldberg with the good news, and the Professor became, so to speak, the new chairman of the Hans Christian committee. He got up a subscription list to be circulated for him, and the boy himself wrote the appeal.

"My need for a time compels me to lay my fate in the hands of noble friends of mankind, since I feel most deeply attached to the art of acting and born only for the service of *Thalia*. For nearly a year I have been supported in Copenhagen by noble men such as Professor Weyse and Mr. Siboni, and I have now had the good fortune of being accepted at the Theatre, at the ballet. If my age, which is just fifteen, should prevent me from becoming a solo dancer, I hope I may stay in the ballet until I can be engaged as an actor. But my salary is almost nothing to start with, and besides this I shall receive only shoes and stockings. Since I cannot possibly make this do for the necessities of life, and since my poor parents in Odense cannot help me, I must needs turn to noble friends of mankind and ask for the gift of a little sum each month until I can support myself. I shall work hard to make the time as short as possible. I can support myself if I can get a salary of a hundred *rigsdaler* a year.

I fervently pray all noble-minded men kindly to consider how near I am to my goal and that it depends solely on them to make me happy by supporting me a little. I have only eternal gratitude to reward them with."

Several noble friends of mankind were moved to put themselves down for contributions, among them Professor Weyse, and even Siboni's two maids, who came and offered part of their wages. Nearly a hundred *rigsdaler* were collected in all.

Like a rocket Hans Christian left utter dejection and attained equal felicity. He was given a fixed stipend a month, he had prospects of education; now he needed only to settle his board and lodging.

His landlady, having heard (one wonders how!) of his great luck and of the money which Guldberg had collected for him, lost no time in offering to board him as well. Enticingly she described how well she would take care of him, and in lurid colours she painted the dangers he would otherwise run in the big city where nearly all except herself were wicked, and as she spoke it seemed to him that only with her would he be safe. To be sure, the room was the afore-mentioned windowless cubicle off the kitchen; however, she said he might sit with her as much as he liked. But one thing was certain, she could not take him for less than twenty *rigsdaler* a month, and she would have to have them in advance, now, immediately!

Terrified at the sum, Hans Christian begged her to take sixteen, begged her with tears that flowed for the snug security of which he had a sudden vision.

But the Madam grew firmer. Not a penny less than twenty *rigsdaler*, she repeated, or he could go wherever he liked.

Go! Who was there to whom he could go? Overwhelmed by his lack of acquaintance among landladies, Hans Christian sobbingly implored her to take the ten *rigsdaler* which was all he had now, and accept the other ten a fortnight later.

She put on bonnet and shawl, insisting that twenty she must have, and at once. It was his own money, Guldberg could not refuse to give it to him. It would be enough for at least four months, and after that time Guldberg would certainly not let him down. Now she was going out, and if Hans Christian could

not produce the twenty *rigsdaler* in advance by the time she came back, he could pack his things.

She went out, leaving the boy hopelessly dissolved in tears. Through them he saw a portrait on the wall; it was his landlady's dead husband, and of a sudden he thought it was looking sympathetically at him. God seemed very far away, and the dead man very near. Like a child, he prayed him to soften his wife's heart. Like a child, he wet his finger in his tears and rubbed it on the eyes of the portrait, to make him feel his bitter grief. Then, exhausted by pain and weeping, he fell into a kind of daze, which lasted until the landlady came back.

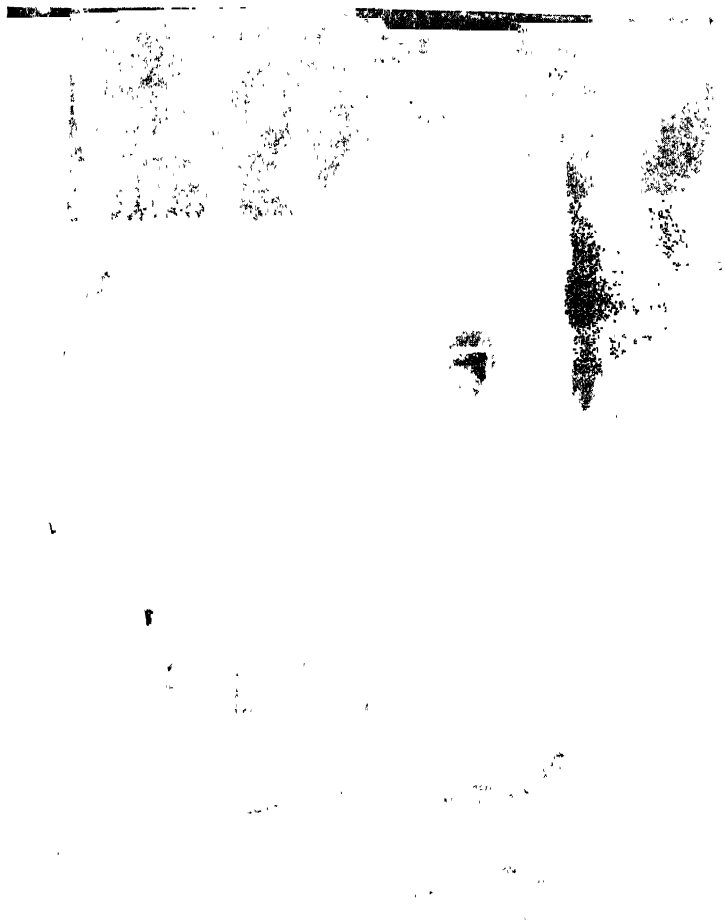
She was in a softer mood. Not a penny less, indeed, than the twenty, but for this month they could be paid in two instalments. Noble woman. She owned the whole four-story house, but Hans Christian surged with gratitude, fell at her feet and kissed her hand, sobbing with joy. He would not, to be sure, have a penny left for clothes, shoes, or other necessities, but he was safe, he had a home. He thanked God and the dead man.

CHAPTER IV

THOUSANDS of ideas now buzzed in Hans Christian's brain for raising the extra money. Guldberg had decided he was to have ten *rigsdaler* a month of the money collected; he could not ask him for more. He went to Weyse, the composer, who promised him some, but still it was not quite enough. None of these scholars or artists was rich, very far from it, they could give only pittances. Into Hans Christian's head came the recollection of Miss Tønder-Lund, the girl in his Odense confirmation class, who had once given him a rose. He had heard that she was now in Copenhagen, staying with her sister, who was married to an admiral. He went to see her. It was a good idea. The rose girl remembered him vividly; she had heard him sing and recite in Odense, and she wept tenderly over his misfortunes, saying she had always thought him very brave to plunge into the world as he had done. She pressed her own pin-money on him, darted around to her friends getting him some more, and spoke enthusiastically about him to her influential relatives.

For some time at least, his board and lodging were secure. Impossible to imagine an odder place than Hans Christian's first home in Copenhagen. The street narrowed at this end, as if the high, dingy houses thought it better to create as much darkness as possible for their occupation. The bold women in the windows had long ago ceased to pay any attention to Hans Christian on his way back and forth to the ballet school, where he stood by the wall every morning and practised standing on his toes. Full of the joys and difficulties of this, of the lessons Guldberg was giving him, and of the new friends he saw in every smiling face, he hardly noticed the shadowed street. In a few long leaps he was up the winding staircase, and into the landlady's kitchen. There he had a right now to sit, by the big open fireplace, but he did not always like to. She often had a visitor, a man. His midday dinners he ate in the kitchen, but after that he felt in the way, and got his supper in his own room. His so-called

room, off the kitchen, with two holes in the door for windows, was so small that it held only two chairs on top of each other, and barely space enough besides for him to dress and undress.



HOLMENSGADE, THE STREET WHERE ANDERSEN FIRST LIVED IN COPENHAGEN

Since he was unable to sit in it, he used to go to bed as early as six o'clock, with a candle, and with his supper on a tray. Luckily the ceiling was high or he might have choked in the dark airless hole, but he never noticed his discomfort. He had a book, and he

read or he dreamed. Soon he began so keenly to miss his little doll theatre in Odense that he made himself another, and now, in his sixteenth year, he spent many of his evenings lying in bed and making costumes for his dolls. To get coloured bits for them, he ventured into shops and asked for samples of silk, velvet, and ribbons, and then he patched them together with brilliant results. He became so absorbed in his miniature world that he often stood still in the fashionable streets and gazed at the rich ladies in silk and velvet, fancying these billowing breadths under his shears, seeing what superb regal robes, full trains, and cavalier costumes he could make of them.

Busy with this, he did not speculate about the life of the landlady's other lodger. She was a kind young woman, who had rooms on the court, kept very much to herself, and often cried. No one ever came to see her, except, she said, her elderly father; he came nearly every night, but only at night. Hans Christian let him in by the kitchen door; he wore a poor coat with the collar up over his ears, and his hat down over his eyes. He drank a cup of tea in his daughter's room, the landlady said, and added that no one was to disturb them because he was very shy. His daughter seemed to get serious, not to say melancholy, when the time drew near for his arrival.

The landlady sometimes sent Hans Christian on long errands, to places that were miles away, but she always gave him a few pennies for it; he had deserved them, she said, and she was not one to do anybody an injustice. Hans Christian took the money with grateful joy. It was in his nature to attach himself to people, and he thought of the harpy who had fleeced him as his kind protector. For the pennies, he could buy a new doll, or paper to write on, or get a book from a loan library. But soon he was able to get some books without paying for them. He remembered that in the house of his friend, the pastor's widow, he had heard that the university librarian was a farmer's son from Odense. This gave him courage to present himself and say that he too was from Odense. The old librarian was impressed by the boy's sincere book-hunger, and allowed him to satisfy it at will, "provided the books are put back in their right places", and when he conscientiously did that, he was even allowed to take them home.

Hans Christian was intensely happy. He did not indeed make much progress at the dancing-school, industrious and eager though he was. Dahlén, who had admitted him, shook his head and said he would probably never make more than a super. But what did that matter, since he was allowed to see the plays free from the back bench of the supers' box in the top gallery. They made jokes he could not understand, and treated him completely as a child in spite of his length of person. But what did anything matter since he was also allowed behind the scenes and could mix in the thrilling disorder. He felt almost part of the cast, although he had not yet trod the boards. But one night he was told he might get his cheeks rouged and take part in a mob scene. He walked in with the others, saw the row of footlights, the prompter in his box, the dark mysterious audience. He was wearing his confirmation clothes; they were now his daily garb, but no matter how carefully he brushed and mended them, they barely hung together, nor had the country-cut improved. The hat still fell down over his eyes. He daren't straighten up; then people would have seen that his vest was too short. Tall and thin and badly dressed, he had long ago learned to expect jibes, but at this moment he thought only of the magic footlights, behind which he at last stood. His heart beat—then one of the actors saw him and dragged him forward. "Let me present you to the people of Denmark", he jeered, and Hans Christian's bubble of joy was pricked; crying, he fled the scene.

This extremely fluid sensitiveness did not always find expression in tears; his readiness to grieve was only the other side of his readiness to rejoice, to be gay, to love everything and everybody, and to burn with innocent rapture. If he met new persons, his whole soul flowered for them; they were given his complete confidence. This embarrassed and repelled some people, but others it attracted, and no doubt Hans Christian's naïveté opened doors and hearts for him, which would have been closed to far more correct behaviour. He soon even found himself getting a glimpse of the court, passed up to it from one woman to another. Miss Tønder-Lund, the girl with the rose, had a sister who was married to an admiral. Her mother-in-law met Hans Christian and praised him to her sister, a charming old lady, who liked the comic innocence of the boy, his worship of the theatre, his

curious stimulating personality. She spoke of him to her daughter, who was lady-in-waiting to the Crown Princess Caroline. When the lady-in-waiting desired to see the entertaining boy, he lost no time but flew at once out to Frederiksberg, the beautifully simple yellow-green copper-roofed palace, which he had passed as he first walked in to Copenhagen.

He had not told much of the story of his life to the lady-in-waiting before the Crown Princess herself came in to have a look. She like her father was simple and direct, and Hans Christian, far from being shy, at once offered to sing and recite. She rewarded him by laughter, applause, cakes, and other good things.

At last, on brilliant clouds of joy, he floated homewards, richer by ten shining silver *rigsdaler*, and carrying a paper bag full of sweets, grapes, and peaches. Walking slowly through the serene and opulent park, which was left open to the public, he realised that he had been shut up in grey tedious streets a long time. He sat down under a tree and ate half of the delicacies in the paper bag, the other half he saved for the landlady. It was a warm and glistening day in early summer. The wide, slow, meandering streams, the vivid grass of the lawns, the aisles of arching lindens, the straight slender pillars of the beeches, the birds and flowers, the sun through the new golden-green leaves, the fragrance, freshness, greenery, all went to his head. In thoughtless joy he began to sing as jubilantly as the birds; he improvised, he talked to the flowers; at last he embraced a young beech, kissing its smooth silver-grey bark.

"Are you crazy?" a rough voice suddenly said at his ears. A groom from the royal stables had come up, shocked at this behaviour in a park belonging to a sedate King. Hans Christian bounded terrified away. He had nothing to say in his own defence. He retreated awkwardly, and tried to walk home like other people.

Whether the landlady was grateful or not for the sweets, she had to have her money, and as the summer wore on the money was getting low. His friends urged Hans Christian to appeal to the King for help. The King was no mere abstraction, no formal name for civil servants and proper procedure. Frederik the Sixth, Denmark's last absolute monarch, attended personally to every petition and to every detail of the national housekeep-

ing, as he did to the kind of butter provided for the royal family. A limited and narrow, though just and good-hearted man, he managed the national housekeeping very badly in the large affairs, but with patriarchal conscientiousness in the details.

In August 1820 he received a cry from Hans Christian's heart, the main point of which was that he had plunged into the great world, "equipped only with a fervent desire for the theatre and a trust in noble souls to help him". He now would like a little aid until he could reach the estate of actor. The King, who probably would have helped the boy had he wanted to be a carpenter, pursed up his thick lower lip, and referred the petition to the Directors of the Theatre. They sent it back at the end of the month with a thorough condemnation of everything Hans Christian had tried to do in acting, singing, and dancing, all his stage endeavours. They stressed his lack of talent and his unfortunate exterior.

Whereupon the King scribbled on the petition that it could not be granted.

Worse still, Dahlén had to tell Hans Christian that there was no hope in the ballet school for him; that he was, in fact, officially discharged. ' was not, however, an easy matter to discharge Hans Christian if one were fond of him, as Dahlén was, so though without prospects the boy remained unofficially attached to the theatre. It was still his "Virginia", the lady giving him but little encouragement. Still, a little sufficed him. Dahlén had written a ballet, and in the goodness of his heart he had even given Hans Christian a small part in it. Though the part was only that of a troll, an anonymous goblin in a corps of goblins, Hans Christian soared to new pinnacles of joy. He saw his name in print for the first time. The day the posters were up, announcing the ballet, he rushed from lamp-posts to walls, from walls to lamp-posts, to regard his name. At night he took the programme to bed with him, and looked again at the printed letters of his name. "Andersen—troll." He laid it away. He picked it up again. "Troll—Andersen." In the candle-light he saw an aureole of immortality.

Yet even he could not believe any longer that his stor' like legs would dance him into fortune. Still he had one more string to his bow: his voice was returning. He re-attacked the Royal

Theatre from another angle, and was rewarded. One of the masters in the singing-school for the chorus admitted him on probation. If he could gain technique and assurance in the chorus, it might even lead to a small part.

Hans Christian breathed again. He could stand poverty, hunger, his absurd clothes, but he had to have hope. Not even loneliness hurt him then. He had friends, to be sure, but they were really more protectors and patrons, as he called them himself. He had no comrades, no one of his own age. Poverty and pride cut him off from them, and perhaps they too sheered away from him themselves, as the children in Odense had done, resenting his oddity.

With careful intervals, he called on his patrons. He was still young enough and bizarre enough to entertain them. Once when he had ventured out to see the lady-in-waiting, he had a shock. He knew one of her guests. It was the father of the young woman who was the landlady's other lodger; the elderly man who came at night in simple clothes, collar turned up. Now he was most elegantly dressed and even decorated with orders. But he never recognised Hans Christian, though it was he who always opened the kitchen door for him. And the boy with sudden blazing insight knew enough not to recognise him.

Adding this together with a few other things, perhaps he was relieved when the landlady told him she was going to the West Indies to be a midwife. Before she went, however, she passed him on to one of her decenter acquaintances, a skipper's widow with a flock of children. Docilely Hans Christian took lodgings with her, and, on Guldberg's advice, only partial board. He got the same sort of windowless hole for a room, but he was free to sit with all the children. He was supposed to save money by buying his dinners out, and he did sometimes go into a cheap eating-house, where the rough customers frightened him, but sometimes he had not enough money even for this. It must be admitted that he sometimes spent the money which should have gone for food or clothes on loan-library novels. His was not an ordered life. But he took the consequences uncomplainingly. He bought a bun and ate it in a park, or else he simply sat in the park and breathed the free air, spending a full hour away from the house so as to make the landlady believe he had been dining

out. He was afraid she might otherwise think he was getting up an appetite for supper. In the harsh northern winter, endlessly bleak and raw, it was a long hour to spend in the park with the dejected sparrows, his own plumage thinner than theirs and his feet for ever wet. Then he went home and starved till supper, but never demanded a crumb more than the number of sandwiches agreed on in the bond.

With all that, he was dauntlessly cheery, and, if he had no intimate friends, neither was he aware of any enemies. His whole nature craved friendliness so much that he saw a real expression of it in every smile. The house of the dancer Dahlén was his best refuge during this time. Mrs. Dahlén and the children welcomed him. Here his poverty and ignorance did not embarrass him; the easy atmosphere of the theatre pervaded the home; here he could give rein to his infectious humour, laugh and play games. Often he came running at night with his doll theatre under his landlady's apron, and he played for his supper. Here too he sometimes met people who told him how bright he was, and that he ought to study. Study—the idea flattered Hans Christian, but when he thought of leaving the theatre even for the university, he was repelled. But he always yearned to get in touch with people who could teach him something, and he had a genuine instinct for them. It was certainly not snobbery, but an attraction towards the best, which led him to introduce himself to the great scientist, H. C. Ørsted, the discoverer of electromagnetism, than whom few simpler, kinder, or wiser human beings have existed. Ørsted's wife was ill at the time, so he could not invite him to the house, but he lent him books, and saw electromagnetically through the boy's awkwardness and oddities to his pure core.

The poet Thiele was not at first so penetrating. He was quietly studying one day, when a knock resounded on his door, and, unannounced, an incredibly tall, thin youth appeared. He wore a shabby grey coat, whose threadbare sleeves failed to reach the long thin wrists. Round the long thin neck a printed kerchief was tied so tight that the neck seemed to be trying to struggle out. The small slightly oblique eyes appeared to need surgical aid if they were to get a view from behind the big prominent nose.

With no introductory fuss, the youth threw aside his cap, bowed to the ground, and said emotionally: "May I have the honour of expressing my feelings for the theatre in a poem written by myself?" Whereupon, before Thiele could say a word, he rapidly recited, first the poem, then a scene from a romantic drama, and then an epilogue by himself, bowed theatrically again several times, picked up his cap, and vanished.

Only later did Thiele learn that this was Hans Christian Andersen, rendering thanks in his own way. Thiele had been on one of Guldberg's subscription lists for him.

As may be inferred, Hans Christian had not lost sight of his goal, which was to become an actor. Dancing and singing were mere rungs of the ladder. Professor Guldberg was moved by so much devotion to an idea, and he persuaded an experienced old actor to test the boy. Hans Christian impressed the actor as having some gift for comic parts, and he allowed him to join his class. The boy did learn some minor comic parts, but that did not satisfy him. He wanted something touching, romantic, grand, to be a hero. He wanted to learn the part of the painter Correggio in the tragedy of that name.

The old actor smiled. "Lord, Lord, my dear child, people would laugh at such a long thin hero, but learn the part if you wish."

In a week Hans Christian was back, brimming with heroic verse. He was told to give the artist's monologue in the picture-gallery, and when he came to Correggio's emotion over the treasures, he burst into real weeping.

The old man took his hands and said: "You've got a heart, no doubt about that, and brains too, but you ought not to be wasting your time here, you ought to be studying. God knows what you are meant for, but you'll never do for an actor. Still, an actor's isn't the only art; there are other wonderful and splendid things to be in life."

"Won't I do at all," Hans Christian pleaded, "won't I do even for the comic parts? O God, I'm so unhappy! What will become of me!"

The teacher patted his cheek. "You ought to learn Latin. If you learn Latin grammar you'll be well on your way towards studying. Ask Professor Guldberg to teach you Latin grammar,

and if you're clever at that, then people will soon see you further."

Everyone said he ought to study. He had no idea what a grammar was; he had never had such a thing in his hand, and on the whole he mistrusted it, as it hardly seemed to point to the theatre, but if everybody said it could do so much, then he was willing to try. And he liked the sound of being able to say, "I am studying Latin". Golden ecclesiastical splendour and black mist of magic still lingered about the word. Hans Christian said to Guldberg that he wished he might learn Latin. The good Professor, who had his hands full trying to teach him Danish and German, thought it was not necessary. Hans Christian, in whose fertile fancy the idea was now growing, considered other ways and means. He remembered that his first Copenhagen friend, the woman from the mail-coach, had a son who was studying. He went to her. She received him most kindly and said it was quite possible that she could get her son to give him free lessons in German, but as for Latin—Latin was such an *expensive* language.

Meanwhile Guldberg had reconsidered. He probably thought it was a good sign that the boy of his own accord wanted to learn something. He was beginning to suspect that Hans Christian was not perhaps as industrious as he might be at the drier tasks of life. He got a friend of his to give the boy a weekly lesson in Latin.

But Latin, alas! in those days, meant Latin grammar. Hans Christian received the book with reverence into his hand; it was the mystic key to those higher reaches of which he dreamed, but when he opened it and the paradigms of declensions and conjugations aligned themselves before his eye, he felt appalled. In such sandy wastes his spirit had never travelled since the multiplication table. Novels, plays, poems had been all his reading. He would do it, of course, but it was not a pleasing prospect.

Meanwhile Professor Guldberg, happy in the thought of a good deed done, went further still, and announced that the proceeds of an oration he was making for the King's birthday would be given to a young artist who was totally destitute. The oration was printed, and a useful amount was raised.

Hans Christian had of course written home about this. He

never failed to report good news in more than life-size, playing down or omitting bad news. But in his mother's dim understanding this piece of news took the form of her son having made the speech as well as having benefited by it. She brought it to his old friend, the pastor's sister, to have it read to her. Eagerly she drank in the words, interpreting them out loud in her own way. The high age of the king was dwelt on. "O, he is thinking of his old grandmother." Frederik the Sixth was called the father of his country. "Ah, the boy's father was a good soul to be sure!" The Queen was entitled mother of her country. To whom could the word mother refer but to Ane Marie herself? She wept grateful tears. In his glory her boy remembered her.

Hans Christian's lessons in Danish included the copying and learning by heart of one of Guldberg's own poems every week. This pleased the boy not much more than the Latin. Was he not a poet himself? He had just read a story, *The Forest Chapel*, which excited his imagination into wanting to make a tragedy in verse out of it. Tragedies in verse were the fashion. He decided to ask if he might write one; though, as he was walking out to the Professor, he wondered if it would not be much nicer to let writing alone and make a bigger doll theatre. But he decided for literature, and Guldberg allowed him to substitute the tragedy for the poem as his weekly task. Much to everyone's surprise, Hans Christian really managed to create a whole drama, immature and rawly romantic of course, but with fancy in it and a certain fluency of language. Guldberg was so pleased with it that he used to read it to his friends.

This was not exactly good for Hans Christian, whose hopes were prone to mount without much ballast of fact. If his piece were going to be read aloud, he could do it himself, and he did. No ear escaped. But this time, unlike Odense, he had a choice of finer and more influential ears. The relatives of Miss Tønder-Lund, the girl with the rose, had to hear it. They were staying in Rahbek's house, the literary critic who had received him so indifferently at the beginning, but now the boy got back into his house on a different footing. Rahbek never addressed a word to him, indeed, but Kamma, his charming and intelligent wife, was amused by Hans Christian. One day when he came to see his friends, she gave him some flowers and said, "Will you take

those to the lady? It will please her to get a bouquet from a poet's hand".

Hans Christian stood still. Tears came to his eyes, and he felt a fire surging through his body and soul. It was the first time that anyone had called him a poet. Before that moment he had looked on writing only as a change from his acting or his doll theatre, now he suddenly saw it as the real goal.

He brought one of his works and read it to Kamma Rahbek. "But", she exclaimed, "you've copied whole long pieces out of Oehlenschlaeger and Ingemann!"

"I have," he admitted happily; "aren't they beautiful!"

The Rahbeks were key people in the literary world, and it was not long before Hans Christian met the two writers whose work he so sincerely admired. Oehlenschlaeger was a genuinely great romantic poet, a Danish Tennyson; Ingemann, still a minor poet, was to become a sort of Danish Walter Scott, whose sentimental historical novels would be extremely popular. Both of them were simple and kind; they listened benevolently to Hans Christian's tragedy. Oehlenschlaeger praised the verses, and pressed his hand in parting. This warm touch by the handsome Olympian seemed to the melting boy like a formal consecration to Parnassus. The gentle Ingemann, too, said only pleasant things about his work; he even helped out his finances a little.

Besides these great lights, a number of minor lights shed kindly beams of praise on the quaint boy, and Hans Christian was fatally ready to believe that every smile was of approval and every word spoken in the utmost sincerity. When one of the Directors of the Theatre in a moment of social expansion went so far as to say that he ought to submit the piece, the zenith of joy was reached. He rushed out to Guldberg and told him the marvellous news, but, to his incredulous astonishment, Guldberg objected. He really felt responsible for Hans Christian and tried to bring him back to a little common sense, exacting a promise from him that he would not submit the piece. The result was that Hans Christian left, silent and sad, the devil of suspicion working for the first time in his soul. He knew that his teacher's own plays had had no success, and the thought of jealousy arose in him.

It was a sinful thought against a decent and upright human

being, but Hans Christian had been intoxicated by incense scattered by the lavish hands of those who did not actually have to teach him or to find his bread for him. The air of the school-room was an unpleasant change, and the idea of tedious work more unpleasant still. Genius making its own way by its own heavenly inspiration was much more the prevailing sentiment. The eighteenth-century reign of intellect and form was beginning to be discredited, and the romantic era was billowing in. Hans Christian saw himself on the crest of it and thought how odious grammar was, especially Latin grammar.

He had now been long enough in the chorus school to be allowed in the stage choruses, and he dearly fancied himself in costume, especially in tights. One night he slipped down to the front of the stage so that King Frederik the Sixth could get a good look at him from the royal box. The King did look at him, startled and amazed at the long spideriness; but Hans Christian was not in the least abashed. Another time he put on scarlet tights in the morning and, with only a short jacket over them, ran down the street to show himself to one of the old ladies who admired his writings. When, however, he and some others were chosen to represent Brahmins, and this involved flesh-coloured tights simulating nakedness, while the hair was reduced to a braid, he was not proud of his looks; he was so emaciated that he cringed with embarrassment, and at the next performance they covered up some of his bones. When he next went to see the lady-in-waiting, the Crown Princess informed him that he had looked like a skinned cat that night, while another chorister looked like a scalded pig.

Princess Caroline still enjoyed coming in when the naïve boy from Odense was there. He broke the news to her that he was going to be a writer of tragedies, and she begged him to refrain, with the age-old plea to write something for people to laugh at instead. But she showed some knowledge of psychology when she corrected a drawing the lady-in-waiting had made of him by drawing a large nose and big eyes on it and saying, "He must look like Schiller".

Poets, princesses, sordid lodgings, hunger, poor clothes, cultured homes opening to him, head laurel-wreathed in the stars, wet feet in the mud, Hans Christian was leading an

aimless, coloured, hectic life into which decidedly grammar did not fit. He began quietly staying away from his Latin tutor. After all, if he were going to be a great writer, he would not need Latin, and even if he were only going to sing in the theatre, he could do without it. So they all told him in the chorus.

One evening he was sitting cosily at the Dahléns', where he felt most at home, playing Bluebeard on his little theatre, having himself made it into an opera. Dahlén was out, but when he came home he said he had met Professor Guldberg, who complained that Hans Christian had begged him for a chance to learn Latin, and now when he had got him the chance, he neglected it.

Guiltily frightened, Hans Christian left the theatre where it was and hurried instantly out to Guldberg to beg his forgiveness. He could not bear that anyone should be angry with him, and he would humble himself to almost any extent to secure renewed goodwill. But this time it was serious. Guldberg had cherished more hopes of Hans Christian than anyone else; he had endowed him with soberer virtues than the poor boy possessed, and he now cholericly went to the other extreme. Formidable against his books and long pipes, he thundered that Hans Christian was downright bad, that he did not want to do what was for his own good, and that all was over between them. He would have nothing more to do with him.

Utterly crushed, Hans Christian trembled before him, sobbing to be forgiven, begging not to be made completely unhappy.

"What are you doing now but standing there and playing a part right in front of me!" Guldberg answered.

"If you leave me," Hans Christian pleaded, "then I have no one! I am to blame, I know, but by the Lord God I shall work harder! I did not understand what it would all lead to, and I had no idea of what Latin really was when I asked you about it."

"Wretch!" Guldberg frowned. "You are giving me another tirade from a play. I have read that before. I will do no more for you. I still have thirty *rigsdaler* of your money; you can come and get ten of those a month, but we are through with each other!" Here he motioned Hans Christian out, and banged the door after him.

In absolutely stony despair, the boy wandered back. Guldberg had said that he was bad, could anything be more terrible? On his way he had to pass a belt of little lakes. He paused by them, and stood a long while, watching the moonlight on the black water. A chill wind blew through his thin clothes. In the bitter, short-sighted grief of youth, he thought: "You will never amount to anything now! You are no longer good! God is angry and you must die!"

He looked down into the water shivering; thought suddenly of his old grandmother, who certainly never would have believed this to be his end, and that brought the tears. Plentifully they streamed, and the heart was eased. He prayed God to forgive him his faults, and the sinful desire to jump into the water; then, comforted, he set off to make good his fault at once. He went straight to his Latin tutor, and asked his forgiveness for having missed several lessons. Naïvely he admitted that on his lesson nights there had been several beautiful pieces in the theatre which he felt he had to see, having free entry to the pit if there were unsold seats, but that he now saw this had been very wrong and he was so immensely sorry.

The kind young theological student, far from scolding the boy, found himself busy soothing all this despair, and finally sent a calmer Hans Christian home. After this he faithfully studied his Latin grammar, but Guldberg was sternly inflexible. He would not see him.

This had the serious consequence that money soon became very scarce. For his work in the chorus he was poorly paid. If he could only get a small part in a real play, he could earn a little more! He wrote an illiterate petition to the Directors and asked for one of the comic parts he had studied with the old actor. He was refused.

CHAPTER V

THE winter of 1821-22 was the hardest Hans Christian had passed. In addition to cold and hunger, he had to put up with mean persecution in the singing-school from one of those beings whose malice is as if awakened and sharpened at the sight of non-resisting goodness. Brandt, one of the other boys in the school, lavished all his spite on the shrinking Hans Christian. If the latter had on white stockings for a stage appearance, Brandt soon stepped on them with muddy feet. His bullying went so far that Hans Christian took pen in hand and complained to the Directors.

“To the High Directors of the Royal Scene!

“Unwillingly I am forced to burden you with a complaint of Mr. Brandt, but everyone in the school knows of his insults to me, and the singing master has absolutely insisted that I acquaint you with them. I do not wish Mr. Brandt any unpleasantness for my sake but only that he will leave me in peace for the future.

“For a whole month, both at rehearsals and in the school, Mr. Brandt has stuffed snuff into my nose and mouth, and shown me other rudeness. Last Wednesday he began as usual, asking me if I had complained of him, as I had threatened to do, and when I said no, I hated to be complaining, he began his usual tricks, filliping my nose, saying he would crush me if I told, and went on being even ruder, until I said, ‘I have never known so rude a Monsieur as you!’ whereupon he gave me a violent box on the ear, which I quietly took, as I had said what I did. But then he began his tricks again, and gave me yet another box on the ear, threatening me if I complained, and reviling me in every way.

“That is all. I wish him no unpleasantness, only that he would stop annoying me.

“I beg the high Directors graciously excuse if this is wrongly written, but it is the first complaint I have made in my life, and I hope it will be the last, for I write it very reluctantly.”

Brandt was made to apologise to his victim before the whole school, which probably embarrassed Hans Christian more than the persecution had done.

He wanted more than ever to attain to actorhood. From his earliest childhood, he had believed that what one did on New Year's Day one would do the whole year, part of the lore of his mother's soothsaying friends. All other means having failed, he decided to try for the stage by magic. But to his intense disappointment, the theatre was closed on New Year's Day. However, he was not to be beaten. In the dark winter morning he sneaked in the back way, past a somnolent doorkeeper. He fumbled amongst scenery and curtains out on to the stage. There was a dim light, but not another soul present. Trembling, as if he were committing a sin, he fell on his knees by the foot-lights. But not one verse from a play could he remember, and yet it was essential that he should speak from the stage. He folded his hands then, and said the Our Father; rose, and sneaked away, as quietly as he had come, convinced that now at last he was sure to get a part.

But the grey, cold, slow months went past, and no part came his way. Money had to be obtained. Had he not been told that his play the *Forest Chapel* might have been submitted? He had promised Guldberg that he would not. Very well, he would write another. Schiller had written about robbers. He wrote a play called *The Robbers in Vissenberg*, based on a folk-tale from home. He intended to submit it anonymously, but he showed Miss Tønder-Lund the manuscript. She, who was still as good as when she had given him the rose, said that his writing was a little hard to read, and in any case it might be recognised, so she would pay someone to copy it for him. She did, and it was not her fault if the fair writing only helped to make its fantastic illiteracy more cruelly legible.

After six weeks of grandiose hopes, it came back, with the following significant letter from the high and extremely patient Directors.

"While the authorised Censors return this piece as completely unsuited to the stage, they wish the Directors to let the author know, that with the absolute lack of elementary culture

and all necessary education which the piece displays in every direction it would be impossible, even for the greatest talent in the world, to produce anything which might deserve to be performed for a cultured public or to be offered to readers of knowledge and taste. They would be greatly pleased if this hint might cause the young man to seek, and his friends and patrons to procure, that guidance without which the career he so eagerly tries to follow must be for ever closed to him."

As if to put the seal of reality on these firm, kind, and pompous words, he soon got an even greater shock; in the early summer of 1822, Hans Christian Andersen was dismissed from the chorus along with other supernumeraries.

Things looked black. He should have been discouraged. He should have taken the first fruit schooner back to Odense. He had no right still to believe in himself. Above all, it was mad to think of saving himself by submitting yet another play to the theatre, yet this was precisely of what he was thinking.

One of his real friends was an old lady, Mrs. Jurgensen, a woman with knowledge of letters and great experience of life, who had the unselfish gift of encouragement in her. She told him not to despair, and that he did have unique ability; she had the prophetic sense of setting herself against all sensible judgment and agreeing with him, when he came to her and said he was going to write a new play.

He wrote it, another tragedy of course, based on a short story. He brought it to the old lady, and read it to her. She took his hand, when he had finished, and exclaimed: "I shall not be alive in ten years, but when that time comes, remember what I say, the world will regard you differently. Oehlenschlaeger will not always be the first—younger men will arise . . ."

Like a powerful drug, these words stimulated the seventeen-year-old boy. They were too strong for the mediocre production which *Alfsol*, the new tragedy, was; but they were needed, even though, as usual, they caused Hans Christian to overshoot the mark a little in rising from despair. He read *Alfsol* aloud, not only to friends and acquaintances, but to utter strangers.

He had just read the Life of Shakespeare, and had been struck by the similarity of his own with it; had they not both

suffered hardships for the theatre? A commander in the Danish navy, Peter Wulff, had translated the works of Shakespeare, and it occurred to Hans Christian that he would no doubt like to see someone whose life so resembled that of his favourite author. With *Alfsol* in his pocket, he introduced himself into the house.

As Wulff tells the story of their meeting, Hans Christian appeared in the door and said: "You have translated Shakespeare; I am so fond of him. But I too have written a tragedy; won't you hear it?" And he started to read.

The astonished officer tried to stem the tide by inviting the famished-looking youth to have lunch with him; but Hans Christian refused, galloping on, and when he had finished, he put the manuscript in his pocket and said: "Don't you think I might amount to something? I want to so much!"

Wulff asked him to call again. "I will," Hans Christian said, "when I have written a new tragedy."

"It won't be for a long while then!"

"Oh no," Hans Christian asserted, "I shall probably have one done in a fortnight!" And he disappeared.

Alfsol was better than anything he had so far done, and his friends could praise it a little more honestly. But his happiness had a large black flaw: Professor Guldberg had not yet forgiven him. He could not endure the thought of unfriendliness, and he had the idea that Guldberg might be reconciled if he were to dedicate a possible edition of the play to him. He wrote and asked permission, but the reply was beyond expectation crushing. Guldberg, writing with more hurt solemnity than the occasion after all warranted, said that Hans Christian could only oblige him by refraining from any such favour. To be publicly pointed out as one who had done anything whatsoever for Hans Christian would be the greatest possible annoyance. The real gratefulness he could have shown, namely, to avail himself of the opportunities provided for study, he would not show; let him not bother about anything else then, and God in Heaven judge between them!

It was rather like slapping a child who comes to bring one a flower to atone for past naughtiness, and Hans Christian felt as boundlessly depressed. But soon he got a grown-up sorrow. His

old grandmother died. He had really loved her, and yet he had never written to her, and she died still wondering why she did not hear from him. He had the irremediable now to grieve him, as well as his inability to wear mourning for her. Like his mother, he was fond of doing the right traditional thing.

It was a hard summer. He had got too old and too shy to tell his friends that he often had nothing to eat. But as they could see that he had practically no clothes, they sometimes gave him an odd garment, and he knew the peculiar torments of wearing other people's clothes, perhaps the hardest part of poverty in youth and the most separating. First there is the joy in getting something that is nicer and of much better quality than anything one could buy, and then there is the nettle-shirt sensation when its inappropriateness as to style and fit dawns on one, mostly in the eyes of one's contemporaries.

One day in the height of a heat wave— and the Danish summer can now and then be stickily oppressive— Hans Christian was going to visit his friends in Frederiksberg who lived with the Rahbeks. He was charmed with a good blue coat, which one of them had just given him; never had he owned anything of such quality, but it was much too big, especially across the chest. Alteration was out of the question, so he buttoned it up all the way to the chin. It looked almost new, the long row of bright metal buttons gleamed, but it did bag very much in front. However, Hans Christian was inventive; he had piles of old theatre programmes, and he padded his chest out well with them. Now the coat fitted. Hunch-chested, so to speak, he called on his friends and on Kamma Rahbek, who of course immediately asked him what was the matter with his chest, and why not unbutton his coat on such a hot day. But though he turned crimson to his hair, he was steadfast in his refusal to open up and shower out programmes; he preferred to suffer both heat and questions.

Less spectacular expedients had to be tried at other times. If the clothes did not fit the body, the body had to adapt itself to them. He was always pulling down sleeves that were too short, or trying to hide a hole, or stopping a gesture in mid-air, remembering that the coat might burst; or making odd motions with his legs so that the trousers would not disclose worn and crooked

boots. For many reasons he did not dare straighten up his tall figure, and youthful pride thus forced him into queer bodily mannerisms. But what brushing and mending, washing and care could do, he did. Ane Marie had taught him meticulous neatness.

His need for money was desperate. If he could get *Alfsol* printed, perhaps he could make a little in that way. At a printing-office he was told that they would do it if he could secure a sufficient number of subscribers for it in advance. Not entirely unacquainted with the ways of the world, he went to see a literary critic for a newspaper, to whom he read the play. The critic obligingly wrote a little piece about him, saying the production was quite remarkable considering his lack of education; not only that, but he got a periodical to print the first scene of Hans Christian's robber play.

If his name on the theatre programme had been a great experience, this was an even greater. His name printed as author! Innumerable times he re-read it, lay at night and stared at it; differing from other authors not so much in doing this as in telling that he had done it.

He now got the idea of collecting all his "works" into a book to be published by subscription. It was to be called *Youthful Attempts*, and to contain his plays and a story written in the manner of his newly discovered literary passion, Walter Scott. He had invented a pseudonym for it, William, Christian, Walter. It was not a remarkably modest pseudonym. While Christian stood for himself, it was sandwiched by William for Shakespeare and Walter for Scott. In spite of this grandeur, the subscribers were few, though he had netted the Crown Princess, the lady-in-waiting, and several professors. The printer was not interested. Quantity, not quality, was his motto.

Meanwhile the encouraging old lady, Mrs. Jürgensen, had not ceased to be interested. She persuaded an influential clergyman to send for Hans Christian, who came with *Alfsol* in his pocket. He read it, and the warm-hearted Dean applauded intensely, no doubt seeing that poor Hans Christian was very near the end of his strength. He suggested that he himself should submit the new play to the theatre for Hans Christian, together with a letter of recommendation to Rahbek, who was one of

the Directors, and his great friend. He also told the boy to call on Jonas Collin, whom he charged himself with preparing. Collin (pronounced *Colleen*) was also one of the Directors, an all-powerful man in the government of the country, one of the King's chief counsellors. The acute clergyman realised that men as busy as were the Directors of the Royal Theatre could not be expected to give very searching attention to such applicants as Hans Christian unless they came explained and recommended.

Hans Christian, who had long been bombarding the Directors, had once before called on Collin, but with no result. This time it was to be the most fateful interview of his life, and like most fateful interviews it had no such air.

Collin lived in an old, crooked, timbered house, built around a little courtyard with wooden galleries. A large linden shaded the pointed gable. The inside was simple, almost austere. Austere, too, the boy thought the keen-faced, laconic man, who listened to him without the least sign of emotion, and who spoke of the submitted tragedy in a manner so brief and casual that Hans Christian left almost thinking he had an enemy in this correct official.

He did not know that Jonas Collin always listened quietly while misery told its story. The tears came to his eyes afterwards, but his was no pleasant idle emotion; behind it he put will to help and sagacity and power.

Hans Christian had only a few days to wait before he was called to appear before the Directors of the Royal Theatre. All the four dignitaries were present. Collin sat silently in the background, while Rahbek addressed the boy, who listened tensely.

The beginning was bad. Rahbek had the manuscript of *Alf sol* in his hand, and he gave it back to Hans Christian, saying it was quite impossible for the stage. It lacked all the culture without which nothing could be produced fit to be offered a public of taste. Still, they had found glints of gold in it, enough real value to justify the hope that if he would study seriously, study everything from the very beginning in a school, he might some day be able to present the Danish stage with works worthy of being performed.

Hence, because of the good they had found in the piece, and because he seemed to be unspoiled, they had decided to provide for his education. The State Councillor Collin was going to plead his cause with the King, and it was hoped that the department of education would allow him free instruction in one of the higher schools. They would let him know which school it was to be. He was to report to Collin in a few days.

Here Rahbek paused and looked expectantly at Hans Christian, who perhaps for the first time in his life was stricken dumb. His brain was whirling, unable to grasp the change in his fortunes. At last he managed to stammer his gratitude before he found his way out.

He was truly dazed, and, if the truth must be told, not especially grateful. He had expected, no doubt, that a deeply impressed directorate was going to give him the poet's wreath of laurel, and instead he was informed that he had to go to school again from the very beginning. His first emotions were, to say the least, mixed. But soon he came back to sanity. The gnawing question of how to live would be solved, and he knew well enough that he had to be educated. He remembered his childhood yearning towards the Latin school. His imagination crystallised around the new idea; he became enthusiastic, a little bit over-enthusiastic. He wrote his mother an exultant letter, distinctly giving the impression that his fortune was made.

Now he soared to the point of thinking he was going to be sent to Sorø Academy, the Danish Eton; he even mentioned it in a letter which he wrote to a certain eminent clergyman to get him to subscribe to that edition of his *Youthful Attempts*, still hanging fire. The clergyman was shocked at his presumption, especially since he was at the head of the department of education and was even then discussing with Collin whether private tutoring with some country parson or a school would be better for the boy. When, therefore, Hans Christian introduced himself and offered to read aloud from his works, he got a reading from his Reverence instead—a proper setting-out of how grateful he ought to be for being put into any kind of school, and how he ought to strive to be worthy of the great favour shown to him.

Jonas Collin did not take this tone when Hans Christian went to see him to learn the details of his fate. This time he

was not the correct official; he was his real self, plain, kind, uncondescending in word or glance. He put no leaden weight of obligation, favour, or "worthiness" into the simple information that he had spoken of him to the King, and that the King was pleased to grant him a sum from the public funds for several years, and that he would get free instruction in Slagelse Latin school. Every quarter he, Collin, would send him the money necessary for his keep, clothes, books, laundry. "And", he smiled, with a warmth in his clear blue eyes, "write me perfectly freely about anything you need and how everything goes with you."

A release from strain, a feeling of peace and safety, overwhelmed Hans Christian. He could only express it by saying to himself that he had a father again who cared for him. As if to prove it Collin at once invited him into his home, and he met for the first time the frail mother, the two children of his own age, and the three smaller ones. Hard-working statesman though he was, Collin took but a

small salary for himself, and no middle-class citizen of Copenhagen lived more plainly. The family had only one servant, and since she was busy and his wife in poor health, the State Councillor rose early in the morning, got everybody's tea, and made the sandwiches for the children to take to school with them. Except on holidays, the family was not permitted to use the front entrance; it was too far from the kitchen for the servant to run to open it, so around the back-yard and up the long narrow kitchen stairs they had to go.

In this kind of household Hans Christian felt a new atmo-

JONAS COLLIN

sphere, a pure alpine air, where poverty did not matter and solid culture did. It exhilarated him to the point of reading *Alfsol* to the family, which they took with their customary self-control. But with them, what father did was always right, even if he brought them anything so unusual as Hans Christian for adoption into their circle. They saw an overgrown boy with a long, oldish face, pale eyes and pale hair, and a pair of yellow nankeen trousers that only reached to the middle of his shins.

But he had no time to make them more than one visit before his departure for school. There were many farewell calls to be made, and, as it turned out, many little sermons to listen to. The people who had so often vaguely said he ought to study, now grew serious and urged him to keep in mind the inconceivable fortune that had befallen a poor lad like him, and they cautioned him severely to work hard.

He said farewell to all, except the printer who had his manuscript, in the hope that if he did not call for it, it would somehow get published, and how wonderful if that should happen while he was at school!

But there was a shadow in the brightness. His mother had of course shown everyone the letter which told of her son's great good luck, and the news of it had excited Karen, his half-sister, to the point where she thought that she too could do no better than to seek her fortune in Copenhagen. She went to her mother and tried to extract Hans Christian's address from her. Why shouldn't her brother, who was such a big man at the Theatre, do something for her? The word "theatre" dazzled her. Karen's father had been lightly irresponsible, and his daughter seems to have been a flighty, uncontrollable damsel. She plagued her mother so effectively for refusing to give her the address, that Ane Marie wrote Hans Christian begging him to give it to his sister himself, so she could get some peace.

The half-sister, who had been huddled out of the way before he was born and whom he had known very little if at all, was the skeleton in the Andersen cupboard. Hans Christian wrote immediately to his mother not to give her the address, and that he could not possibly have helped her, even had he been staying in town.

But it was too late. Karen had forced her mother to tell. On his last day in Copenhagen before leaving for school she knocked on his attic door, to his utter consternation as well as to her own, for she had certainly not imagined this dark little hole to be her brother's residence. What could he do? He had to leave for the school, and Karen installed herself in his room. It was not the best street in Copenhagen for a wilful, pleasure-seeking girl of twenty to seek her fortune.

Hans Christian knew this, and it embittered his departure. But he had not been long on the way, together with several gay young students, before their good-humour and the sunny, crisp autumn day dispelled the shadow. Before long he had joined in their singing, as the mail-coach lumbered along the road to Slagelse and the new life.

CHAPTER VI

LATE in the evening, the 26th of October 1822, the mail-coach rattled over the cobblestones of Slagelse and stopped at the inn. Hans Christian asked the landlady about the sights of the town, getting the answer that there were only Pastor Bastholm's library and the new English fire-engine. Early the next morning he was inclined to agree with her. After his three years in the capital, he glanced rather patronisingly at the little provincial town. Slagelse lay in rolling green fields, two churches and a windmill rising above a few streets of low red-tiled houses. These simple surroundings gave him courage, and he reported at the school conscious that he was a Copenhagener and a poet.



SIMON MEISLING

Meisling, the Rector, received him pleasantly. Collin had written, and everything was arranged. The Rector was a thick-set, bull-necked, untidy little man, not yet forty. He had very short arms, red hair, and a round puffy face, whose high, bald, bulging forehead and ironic mouth boded ill for young poets. But though the neat Hans Christian noticed the soiled linen, greasy frock-coat, and dirty hands, he thought as usual that a new acquaintance was a new friend, and he was delighted when the Rector invited him to his home in the evening. Hans Christian lost no time in availing himself of the audience; he read them two of his plays. The Rector was non-committal, but his wife was more appreciative. Mrs. Meisling was a plump and languishing lady with unmended frills and dingy ribbons fluttering about her, but Hans Christian's heart swelled proudly;

he was excited and exuberant. He enjoyed showing his new schoolmates what an unusual phenomenon he was.

At night he was taken to his lodgings in the home of a respectable widow, who had only one student boarder beside himself. She was a hospitable, welcoming soul, and he enjoyed waking up in his little room, where the morning sun fell through the small greenish panes of the window—white curtains inside, grape vines outside, and a view of the garden and the fields beyond. It was heaven compared to the windowless hole and the dubious grey street he had left behind. Something stung him at the thought. He must write his mother about his sister, and the madness of having let her come to Copenhagen.

Meanwhile he let himself rest in the secure contentment of having his living provided for in this gentle environment. Slagelse seemed a rustic idyll, in which he was to gather the fruits of knowledge. But not to write poetry. All his Copenhagen mentors had been insistent on that point, almost wounding. Well, he would show them that he could study. As he walked to his first class, he drew all the nervous energy he was master of to the support of that idea.

It was a shock to find himself rising up like a church tower among his class-mates. Meisling had put him in the second lowest class among the little boys, since, though he was almost twice their age and height, he knew only about half as much. But during the first weeks the teachers were forbearing and patient; one of them told him of the famous men who had been pupils there, and added, "Now let me see that you too will be an honour to the school". Every Sunday the Rector invited him to his house, and he was let go to church with the big boys, to the intense annoyance of his small class-mates. His first monthly marks were not at all bad, and in his joy he thought of using them as a means towards a reconciliation for which he yearned—a reconciliation with Professor Guldberg, the man who had despaired of him and condemned him as a good-for-nothing. Few things had so upset Hans Christian's estimate of himself, and he had not the temperament which would rid him of the upset simply by repressing it, or by hating and depreciating Guldberg. But he vitally needed his vision of himself restored, so he copied out his marks and sent them to Guldberg with a

humble letter, which the good professor at once answered in the kindest way, and they continued to correspond.

It really seemed as if he were going to be able to cope with the life of grammar and discipline, and when he wrote his mother about his sister's unfortunate arrival in Copenhagen, he did not fail to tell her of his own new triumphs.

His mother, who, not being able to write, always had to find a secretary, this time appealed to Hans Christian's former teacher in Odense, a sombre Norwegian, and, though ostensibly from Ane Marie, a blend of home truths from both the teacher and the mother could be traced in the letter.

"You need not worry about your sister's youth or virtue; we took good care of that in Odense" was her only comment on this point; too sanguine indeed, since Karen immediately disappeared from both their kens into the underworld of Copenhagen. But for the present the mother seemed more worried about her son.

"You are now in the Latin school, and you are getting along well; this gives pleasure to your many friends here, and especially of course to me, your fond mother. It greatly relieves my heart, and secret tears of joy often flow from my eyes how could I, a poor woman, ever think or hope that the most gracious Father of our country would show such favour to a boy who, so to speak, came tumbling head foremost into the great world.

"You are now a beginner; I do not doubt for a minute that you will work hard and try to earn the goodwill of your superiors, but one thing I will ask of you: try not to lose yourself in the great abyss of learning, but use your time carefully, and consider each fact well by itself, and do not try to gallop before you can walk: this is my well-meant and motherly counsel to you. And when you have really learned something, then it will be time enough to talk about being an honour to literature and doing something for the betterment of taste; you will realise this yourself, my son, in time to come.

"The people who know you here in town have never, as you seem to think, either blamed or mocked you for what you have done or are doing; on the contrary, they have always been happy to hear of your good fortune.

"Dear Christian, learn to know people, and do not be too proud of your own little self; it is not very important as yet. Learn to be humble and grateful and all will go well with you."

These were the salient points of this significant letter, and they expressed in concentrated form the worries of all who knew Hans Christian in past, present, and future, including himself. They, no more than he, understood that his apparent self-confidence, his vanity, were not the expressions of a base nature, but the devices of his handicapped soul for making the best of the great gifts that were really in it. In effect he was always chanting an incantation to himself: so weak, so poor, such a scarecrow am I; such a fearful inheritance of insanity have I, that I must climb higher than the highest to prove my worth. Up, up, and there must never be any doubt but that I can get up. Of course I can; I am intelligent, greatly gifted, a genius!

But there was doubt. It lay always crouched in his soul, and it fed on every criticism. It was a danger, and yet it was the watch-dog of his sanity. Was he vain and superficial? He asked himself this with increasing anxiety, as the first indulged and mellow weeks of his school-life began to wane, and the teachers became harsher and not so patient. They thought they had made enough allowances for his natural bewilderment and his lack of previous training. They could not understand his tense emotionality nor realise the depths of his ignorance.

He could not even find Copenhagen on the map. He had never seen a geometry book. He had to begin again at writing and arithmetic, while terrible waves of Greek, Latin, geometry, history, geography, French, and German crashed over him, leaving him blindly staggering for a foothold. From eight in the morning till noon, and from three till six, he sat on the school-room bench in unaccustomed immobility. It was the other extreme from the bird-like freedom of Copenhagen. He bent with convulsive industry to the new tasks, but they were too much for him. He might learn a lesson ever so well by heart, yet when it came to reciting, he fumbled and stumbled and lost the order of things.

Late at night, when the lessons were done, he guiltily took the forbidden harp from the wall, and relieved himself by

writing poetry in which he sighed for the happy days of childhood when he lay in the snug family bed and had his mother to watch over him. Alas, that he had fluttered out into the world, had let his ambitions rise so high that the kind fatherly Collin was now bound to be disappointed in him. It was a subdued and uncertain Hans Christian who accompanied Meisling and his family to the capital for a few of the Christmas holidays. Slagelse had only one coach for hire, an ancient rickety thing, but into it were stowed the Rector, his wife, their maid, four children, and Hans Christian. Pancakes and sugar were the supplies, and a large feather-bed laid on their laps kept them warm. By the light of a lantern they played cards on the feather-bed, and Mrs. Meisling sang arias from *Don Juan*. Fuzzy with down, they arrived in the city, where Hans Christian met with old Mrs. Jurgensen, she who was one of his bravest encouragers. Even fortified by her, he trembled to have to go to Collin with his book of school marks. But Collin declared he was well content; industry and behaviour were the most important things, and he saw that those were highly commended. He shed quiet friendly radiance on Hans Christian, lent him money for a new coat, and invited him to a meal in his home. The young Collins were pleasant, but still rather distant; they seemed to suspect an emotional volcano and to walk warily.

Hans Christian had barely time to dash around to a few of his friends, among them Professor Guldberg, and to renew his acquaintance with the theatre, when it was time to return to the cage of learning.

It was now 1823. With the new year, when teachers and employers somehow expect perfection, his real troubles began. He was not brutalised. Neither the boys nor the teachers persecuted him; to begin with, he was treated no differently from anyone else. But since in fact he was different from everyone else, with fine antennae quivering in all directions, he soon aroused annoyance by his very sensitiveness. The Rector especially, whose rough tongue was feared by all, began to torment him. Luckily he taught the second class for only one hour a week, but Hans Christian feared it so much that he often used to pray for minor accidents in order to avert the hour. Providence did not oblige, however, and his class-mates could

feel the whole bench shake when he had to recite. He might know the right answer, but he would put it in so muddled a way that the Rector would ridicule him, completely crushing him for the time being.

But his life was not all made up of fear of defeat. A little money had come his way, a tiny inheritance from his grandmother. He gave a generous share to his mother, and paid Collin back the money for the coat. With the rest he bought linen and things, accounting for every penny of it to Collin, whom he regarded literally as a father confessor. He was not so badly dressed now, and as a student he had a certain standing in Slagelse. There was a kind Jewish family; their sensitive nerves and his were akin. The life of the little town centred in the school. The students were allowed free admittance to the dramatic rehearsals of the dramatic society, and Hans Christian had all the joys of criticising scenery, lighting, music, and acting. *He* had been at the Royal Theatre

Now and then he liked to recite his poems to the blonde girls who lived next door, one of whom read his French and German lessons with him. He was careful to explain that they were his old poems, and that he was practically under oath not to write any while he was at school. Indeed, he did write only one official poem during the first year; it was on the death of that Dean who had helped him to know Collin. Somehow the poem appeared in the Slagelse paper, and somehow, although it was unsigned, the author was known to the editor, that Pastor Bastholm whose library, together with the new English fire-engine, were the sights of the town. Hans Christian called on him, leaving a trail of his works, and Bastholm wrote him a letter which really impressed the boy. He praised the imagination and the emotional warmth shown by the writings, but in the kindest way he stressed the need for a trained mind. He begged him to write poetry only to relieve his real feelings; to write nothing if ideas and words had to be sought for; to await the stimulus of a thought or an emotion; to gaze at Nature, at man, and at himself so observantly that he would always have a store of original material; to select little topics from his environment; to look at everything from every point of view before seizing the pen; and above all to be a writer as if there

never had been one in the world before, and as if he had nothing to imitate from any of them.

Along with this excellent advice to young writers generally, there was also a soft warning about avoiding the infection of vanity. It was perhaps on this account that Hans Christian stopped reading his tragedy *Alfsol* aloud to people, or perhaps because they had all heard it, or, most likely, because the Rector strictly forbade it, which increased his awe of Meisling.

Yet the dreaded Rector was like a different man on Sundays. The tables were moved out of the classroom, and his children, Hans Christian, and some other students came there for games, in which he took a boisterous part, doffing his dignity to an almost dangerous extent. He liked to play forfeits, or to tip the long Hans Christian into a pram and wheel him around, or anything that was rough and noisy. Meisling was what is called a brilliant classical scholar, but his soul seemed to have developed only in the grammatical direction. Apart from scholarship, he had the manners and habits of a cattle driver, now noisily good-humoured, now maliciously brutal. He defiantly indulged his coarse tastes, and felt an instinctive hatred of the instinctively gentle. He was entirely unlike anyone Hans Christian had known before, and the boy was both puzzled and frightened. He felt his whole future to be at the mercy of this incalculable creature, and yet he was in the dark as to how to please him.

What Meisling seemed to value Hans Christian most for was as a nurse and playmate for his children. Hans Christian was not especially fond of children, but his endless good-nature and his utter dependability made distracted parents seize on him everywhere. So when Hans Christian suggested that he would like to visit Odense for the Easter holidays, the Rector demurred. He meant to go alone to Copenhagen himself, and really, the children—but perhaps he could be spared for a week.

Hans Christian set about getting the means for travel, and he secured a little sum from the Crown Princess, through the lady-in-waiting's mother, not without getting the usual homily from the latter. After urging him not to forget to date his letters, she begged him not to be always thinking that he was destined to greatness, but to aim sensibly for some little office which he

might fill with competence. "You know I always speak perfectly frankly." The bitter drop slid easily off his back; he was jubilant at the thought of going home at last in the style of which he had dreamed, neatly dressed, and officially on his way to greatness, never mind what anyone said!

Iversen, the old printer, had promised to put him up, and he had the Princess's money for the journey; but he did most of it on foot, starting from Slagelse at three in the morning, dressed in his best and with a change of linen in a little package. He crossed the waters of the belt in a smack with a favouring wind, and stood again on the shore of Fyn. With long steps he at last approached Odense, and his heart beat violently at the first glimpse of the cathedral spire. He remembered to fall on his knees and thank God for His fatherly care, then he ran the rest of the way singing at the top of his voice. As if in a happy dream, he entered the streets of his childhood, and in one of the first of them he met his mother. So changed was he from the child she had said good-bye to in the mail-coach four years ago, that she did not at once know him; but soon they were in each other's arms, kissing and crying. The poor old woman could hardly understand that he was really there, and so grandly circumstanced. The printer and his family received him heartily, and so did Colonel Guldberg, into whose warm, pious, and sympathetic heart he walked as though he were a lost son. The simple, unselfish soldier listened to all the schoolboy's troubles, and responded to Hans Christian's pure heart, even though he tried to correct his egocentricity by orienting him towards God.

It was spring, and he visited all his old haunts; it soon began to seem as if the years away had been a dream. Every day he saw his mother, whose pride grew momentarily. Oh, if his grandmother could only have seen him! Some of the humbler neighbours, not quite knowing how to address him, called him Mr. Christian. His mother kept telling of this one and that one whom he really must go and see; everyone, in fact, in the street where she lived. "They're all calling and shouting to me," she said; "you will simply have to go!" And he did ~~where~~ they ever so lowly. She fetched him from the Colonel's one night to see a housekeeper, who could do nought but blush and curtsy when he came.

He knew that many little windows were slanted open to look at the Odense boy who was studying for the King's money. His mother told him they were saying that Marie shoemaker's boy hadn't been so crazy after all. A bookseller who had built a tower on his house took him up in it, and he looked below to the square, where some of the old women from the hospital were standing; saw them pointing up to him, knew they were boasting they had known him as a child. But when he sailed on the placid, gleaming stream among the gardens with the Colonel's and the Bishop's families, his mother cried for joy and sobbed that he was being honoured as if he were the child of a count. This was her high point, and Hans Christian's too. Only the scene of humiliation can be the scene of triumph. But the dream lasted all too briefly, and the vainglory vanished with the return to Slagelse.

In the treadmill of the old-fashioned school, temperament was not something to be fostered and indulged, it was an annoyance or an impertinence. The fresh gaiety, naïve enthusiasms, and responsive tenderness which had charmed and won his sophisticated friends in the capital were not currency here. The hardworking, humdrum teachers were neither urban nor artistic. With the exception of the teacher of religion, a steady, wise, and kindly man, they tended to resent this unclassifiable student, always flaring up or guttering out. The history teacher was crotchety and pedantic. He was always chewing his red moustache; once he called Hans Christian long enough to be cut in half and made two pups of. The Danish teacher was dulled by long years of work and hated flights of fancy. "What perfect rot have you been slinging together now!" he would exclaim crossly, as he held up Hans Christian's composition book with two fingers as though it were a dubious rag. Some of the themes that he was given to write on, in that poor little book, seemed suspiciously purposeful. "Why is it, generally speaking, unwise and harmful to aim one's hopes and expectations too high?" Docilely agreeing with the principle, Hans Christian managed to wriggle away from it and to enlarge on the joy that man feels when he dreams of the future and paints it bright and splendid, and how just this gives him a goal which he uses all his energy to reach. But when he was told to write on

"The caution to be exercised by youth in striving for praise", he boldly asserted that praise and glory were the incentive to all art, and that no poet, composer, sculptor worked for himself alone.

He had, of course, given all the teachers plenty of reason to believe that his opinion of himself needed taking down, and they were not gentle about trying to do it. They succeeded only too well. His gaiety and confidence, so precariously built over sloughs of despondent inadequacy, crumbled down, and he struggled in the murky depths. He spent every spare hour on his lessons, wept over them, believed bitterly that he was incapable of progressing, and wrote Colonel Guldberg of his misery.

The Colonel turned aside from his dragoons, and wrote back, warmly encouraging. Never think of being too old to learn. Only sincerely concentrate on studying. And, in words like a kind hand smoothing a child's hair, he besought him never to flatter himself nor to let others do it. Truth should be poetry's nurse; let it never be wounded in word or thought. If it were, self-respect would be lost, and the respect of others. And so-called good society was quick to resent the vain.

The soundness in Hans Christian responded to real tact, and he tried to improve, at least verbally. He wrote in a letter, "I won't be a minor poet; if I can't be great, I will strive to become a useful member of society". But that he would die if he could not become great was his real *leit-motiv*. "I still have my childlikeness", he also wrote, "but that makes me feel so well", an odd awareness of his essential quality.

Meisling was to be formally installed as Rector at the Bishop's official visit, and the singing-teacher asked Hans Christian to write a cantata for the students. Needless to say, he wrote it, and looked proudly forward to hearing it performed in church. The day came, and he was there early. He was always nervously ahead of fixed hours, and he put in the time wandering in the churchyard. Among the neat and domesticated graves, he came on one where weeds grew and rags were hung to dry, and he deciphered on it the name of a forgotten poet. Like a black tidal wave, uncertainty rushed up from below and overwhelmed him. Could he be great? Impossible! Better be dead then, and

buried in neglected oblivion. He toyed with the idea; it was dreadful, but it had rest in it; rest from the tense striving he had imposed on himself, and freedom from ever-threatening failure. He forgot the song triumph; he had to be searched for to come in and hear it, and no doubt the teachers looked down their noses and thought he was showing off.

The death mood of course never lasted very long. He copied out the cantata and sent it to Collin, "as he had promised not to write poetry and felt bound to tell him of it". He noted with bitterness that Meisling never even mentioned the song. But the Rector was a translator of the classic poets, and had written verses of his own; he felt the young whelp had to be put in his place. The gist of his pedagogy was indeed to put both teachers and students in their place, and he considered it a low one. If a herd of cattle happened to pass, he would tell the whole class to stand up and look at their brothers, or he would suddenly break off in a speech and address himself to the stove. He believed in administering a daily dose of discouragement, and he soon decided that Hans Christian needed the largest share. Brutal as this was, it did seem to galvanise the boy; he hurled himself at Greek and Latin grammar; no one worked so hard. He allowed himself only a few rare walks, mostly at night to the ruins of an old monastery, where he sat and despaired by moonlight among broken bricks and nettles, mortally afraid meanwhile that the ghostly monks would rise.

The summer holidays came, but he decided to stay in Slagelse and study. Fortified by this resolve, he took a few Sundays off to visit the kind of people for whose society he always hankered, the poet Ingemann and his wife. The young author had encouraged Hans Christian while the latter was still a wonder-child in Copenhagen, and the boy gladly walked the many hot dusty miles to their home in Sorø by the still clear lake, wood-encircled. This was the other pole from the pedantry and humiliation of the school. The high-minded, sensitive young couple welcomed Hans Christian. He loved their garden and the idyllic little house, full of paintings and portraits of famous men. He sailed with them on the lake, an aeolian harp at the mast, and he humbly adored the pale, delicate, dark-eyed hostess. At night she played the piano, and the three of them sang hymns. Here

he could talk poetry. True to his word not to write verses while in school, he used to make them up on the road to Sorø for his friends to hear. The good elegiac Ingemann treated the youth as a confrère-to-be. He even made friends with two youths from the school where Ingemann lectured. They likewise wrote poetry. After these visits he always felt stronger and saner, and it showed in his work. He redoubled his efforts, and did so well in the autumn examinations that Meisling promoted him to the third class, and wrote a generous tribute to his indomitable industry in the sacred book of marks.

Hans Christian's happiness knew no bounds. He leaped, he soared, he was born anew, he was young once more; he wrote letters of sparkling joy to his friends and got encouraging answers. Collin expressed his satisfaction. The Crown Princess sent a little donation so that the Christmas holidays could be spent in Copenhagen. It was almost more than he could bear, and indeed he could not. He began again to communicate his ambitions, and to wonder should he take Goethe, Shakespeare, Schiller, or Walter Scott for his model. He mentioned his high destiny in rather more definite terms than some of his friends could stand, and at least one of them, the motherly and sensible wife of Commander Wulff, took it on herself to try to cure him. In a letter which breathed as much real affection for him as it did her merely terrestrial understanding, she implored him to listen to her maternal advice and give up the unfortunate thought that he was born to be a great writer. He must not get ideas in his head, simply because he had a good mind and kind people wanted him to have a chance to train it. These wild yearnings for greatness could only destroy his opportunity to become a good citizen. Of course he was not without talent. He could do comic little sketches well enough, but let him stick to studying without worrying too much, and let him mind his health and not sit up late at night. Then some day when he was a useful member of society, his talent would serve nicely to scatter a few flowers on his own path and that of his friends.

Nevertheless, although Hans Christian wrote a prim composition about industry leading to a civic career, he lived once more in the starshine of his own absurd and exalted hopes. Aureoled by them, he visited Copenhagen at Christmas, the Crown Princess

again furnishing the means. He had only a week, but he revelled in every metropolitan minute of it. All his heroes and patrons received his visit. Oehlenschlaeger and others listened benevolently to his poetry. The friend who was putting him up took him to the theatre every night. Rather than miss the Saturday night performance in order to return with the mail-coach, Hans Christian chose to stay, see the play, and walk back on Sunday. At the dark frosty dawn he started off, Christmas coins jingling in his pockets. He was laden with books, among them most of Scott's works, also a present from the Princess. It got colder and colder, but he walked faster and breathed on his stiffening fingers. Snowflakes began to swirl; he strode along the middle of the road, took a peep at Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and cheered himself by singing. One o'clock at night he reached Slagelse, slept, and appeared Monday morning, ten days before the holidays were over, to entertain the Rector's children.

One might have thought such obedience mollifying, but no sooner had school begun, in the new year of 1824, than Hans Christian's sensitiveness, like a magnet, again attracted Meisling's unsubtle sarcasms. "Shakespeare with the vampire eyes" was a sample of the Rector's wit, and when his victim burst into tears, he would order another student to "run out and get him a brick to wipe his eyes on", instructions carried out to the point of laying the stone on Hans Christian's desk. If Meisling as much as suspected that the boy was writing poetry, he opened up: "You're a stupid fellow; nothing will ever come of you! You'll scribble a lot, I have no doubt, when you're on your own, but don't imagine that anybody will ever read it; it will be sold for waste paper. Well, if he isn't going to cry now—the bean-pole!"

This might have been a rough but well-intentioned method of trying to harden the all too tender-minded, but at other times Meisling took offence with irrelevant ease. After one period which had been filled with rectorial gloom and ominous looks, the boy at last sat down and wrote one of those desperate youthful letters, which would be trivial if it had not been so full of real suffering.

"You are angry with me, and especially because I am said to have smiled when I got a bad mark, but I swear by God that I

never did—— [and so on]. All grammar is difficult for me, and if I am frightened the blood goes to my head and I answer wrongly. Bear with me yet awhile; if I don't improve, I shall leave. If I have offended you in any way, O tell me what it is; let me defend myself. Forgive me!"

No doubt he blotted it with his tears, not helping matters thereby. The Rector's angry gloom did not really spring from Hans Christian's supposed smiles and uncertain grammar. He was a husband as well as a rector, and his dear wife had been complaining that the hoity-toity ladies of Slagelse would have nothing to do with her. There were to be amateur operatic performances in private homes, and some of the students with good voices had been asked, among them Hans Christian. But she, she who had studied singing in the capital, she was left out. The Rector informed the students that of course they could go where they had been invited, only beware, if they stumbled in their lessons afterwards, he would sing for them! They chose to stay away, but it came out that Hans Christian had already recited a poem in one of the proscribed houses, and now he had to serve as lightning-rod for the Rector's wrath. Meisling threatened to tell Collin, threatened to expel him, said he was absolutely good for nothing, and that he simply couldn't stand him!

This was all serious tragedy to Hans Christian and he wrote his friends that there was now no way out except to go to America, synonym for death, failure, oblivion. Collin and Guldberg wrote back consolingly, and Mrs. Wulff scolded and told him he was an utter child. Comparative peace was restored. The thunder passed.

At that time Denmark still had capital punishment, and the Rector, like others in his time, had the idea that it was an edifying affair for the young to see. As there was to be a triple execution not far from Slagelse, he sent the older students to witness it. A seventeen-year-old girl whose father objected to her choice of a husband got the young man and a farm-labourer to murder the father. Now they were all three to have their heads cut off. Hans Christian and his school-mates drove to the neighbouring town in the night, and reached the city gate at dawn, just as the condemned were driving out of it. The girl

was very beautiful, but lividly pale; she was held in the arms of her lover and leaned her head on his breast. He looked ruddy, strong, and healthy. Behind them sat the farm-labourer; his face was yellow, and his long black hair strayed down over it. Some people called "good-bye" to him, and he took off his hat, nodding to each of them.

It was a beautiful morning. Three ministers followed the condemned up to the place of execution, where they stood, each by his coffin. All three joined in singing a hymn. The girl's voice rose pure and high over the others. Hans Christian's feet could scarcely carry him.

The three then kissed each other and kissed the ministers; at last the girl kissed her sweetheart once again; then laid her head on the block. It fell only at the second blow. The two others laid their heads on the same wet block. Hans Christian had been pushed into the circle around them; it seemed to him their strange eyes had met his; he felt transfixed by them, petrified. People brought up a poor epileptic; it was a superstition that drinking the warm blood was a cure. The remedy had been discussed in Odense once for him, and he shuddered.

After the execution the girl's weeping grandmother coffined her, but the heads of the men were put on poles. The executioners comforted themselves with fried eels and gin. A tailor went around selling a ballad he had written for the occasion to the crowd. He did good business. Some of the farmers commented on the waste of good clothes that others might have used, but some said, "Oh, those are the last they'll be wearing".

Hans Christian got home somehow to his lone little room, but he could not sleep that night. A storm blew, the vines tapped on the window-panes; he kept seeing the pale heads and the strange gaze of the girl. For many months his dreams were haunted.

CHAPTER VII

HANS CHRISTIAN was rather near the foot of the ladder; still he was on the ladder, and high enough up to be dizzy with fear at the idea of dumping into the depths he had left behind. When the Rector scowled and jeered, he saw himself slipping. There was more than mere hysteria in his fears. School meant so infinitely more to him than it did to the ordinary youth; not only did he now see it as the necessary approach to the height of glory he dreamed of; he knew he owed his presence there to the pure benevolence of his patrons.

Benevolence is as charming a word as it is a virtue, but it has to be almost divinely exercised for the sensitive not to find it a heavy load to receive, and for the supersensitive, such as Hans Christian, it can be an intolerable burden. What a difference it would have made to him had he lived a hundred years later and could have received higher instruction as his good right! He would never have gone to school in the bored, half-condescending way of those young people who indicate that they only do it because their inexplicable parents insist: it would always have been a great and difficult enough adventure for him, but he would not have had the added responsibility of living up to benevolence, of being "worthy". And, since he had to receive food, lodging, and clothes as gifts, as well as education, he had ample chance to suffer in the lonely gnawing way that only proud, sensitive, and inexperienced youth can suffer. Collin was indeed the simplest and kindest of patrons, but he had nearly half the affairs of the kingdom to manage, and he could not give his undivided attention to a far-off schoolboy. He wrote seldom and briefly. Hans Christian nearly always had to remind him when his board money was overdue, or when he needed books, or, worse still, when he needed a pair of new shoes or a pair of trousers. He hated more than anything else to have to ask for clothes. The letter that contained an apparently casual reference to "enough money for a new pair of trousers"

was a significantly constructed affair, containing all his good marks for the period, his whole life story, a tribute to his abilities from a friend of Collin's, a humble remark as to his being aware of his own "confused and airy" character, then a proof of the Rector's goodwill toward him, and all somehow leading up to, apologising for, and justifying the petition for new trousers. It is certain that he had mended his old ones for many embarrassed weeks before he could bring himself to ask, and that he sat down writhing with pride to do it. This sort of thing made deep scars in his soul, and his determination to be "great", to be justified, became more feverish. No doubt a spurt of "thus I'll be revenged" sentiment also gushed up, but, gentle and affectionate, he quickly suppressed it, dwelling instead heavily on his own shortcomings.

Again and again in his letters he fretted about not being worthy of what was being done for him; he repeated that he was afraid he was too old to learn, had been too neglected and too flighty; had flattered himself too much; had overstuffed his head with haphazard reading; had in short nothing whatever to his credit except the will to learn and good behaviour, and this of course was nothing. The Rector was probably right, he could never amount to anything. To fill his cup, he was tormented by toothaches. In despair, he struck the big, favourite chord: "I must be great—or nothing. As I cannot attain greatness, I must utterly sink."

This hurt the good Colonel Guldberg, who, being the most tender-hearted of his friends, always got the most heartrending letters. He warned him of danger in kind, strong, devout words. If he had only been able to mix a little humour into it as well, he might have had more effect. Collin, who got less frankness than Guldberg did, got enough to make him write a few shyly affectionate words of encouragement, while Mrs. Wulff in loving rage put him across her knee and spanked him, equally impatient with his self-praise and self-depreciation. "You won't get to be a cabinet minister, nor the country's foremost poet, but why need it be a tailor or a cobbler? Aren't there hundreds of stations in between? Why so sensitive about receiving help? Is there a human being on this earth who doesn't need help in some form or other? And why the big words? I really don't

know what the great goal is you keep speaking of. What need you be other than good and just, which you are, and a useful citizen . . . ?”

“I can’t”, was his wail. “You can and you must!” was their chorused reply, and, since his wailing was partly insurance, he did better than his fears, and was even at the head of his class by the end of the year, an honour which made him most uncomfortable. He got his Christmas draught of Copenhagen, but it was only a week as usual; and he wandered back to Slagelse on foot, through frozen mud and chilly rain.

Meisling, for reasons which probably had little to do with pedagogy, was milder and more forbearing in the new year of 1825, and Hans Christian wrote joyfully to Collin that he had heard the Rector was helping a poor widow who had been governess for his children, and that the Rector had asked him to dinner, and that he had given him a ticket for a concert. As he said of himself so often: “I know I am much too childish; a smile only, a kind word, fills my soul with joy, and a cold look can awaken complete despair in me”.

During this summer he had another week’s holiday in Odense, as the guest, this time, of Colonel Guldberg. He read him a few chapters he had tried to write of a historical novel, *à la* Scott. Guldberg was generous with his praise. Hans Christian glowed.

“Truly, honestly, you mean it?”

“By the Lord Almighty!”

Bliss shot through him. He was recognised, appreciated; his spirits soared. “This one phrase gave me a courage, a will to study, such as Meisling’s daily severity never could have done. My nature is such that blame dulls and frightens me, praise gives me courage and will-power; it never makes me vain, no, it makes me cling to God, and only fear not to be worthy.”

Honest naïveté alone is capable of such subtle and complete self-knowledge as this. Only the Unconscious is innocent and fearless enough to tell the artist, when at work, where the truth lies, though in his life he may continue to obey the voices of the world. But in Hans Christian the Unconscious was made flesh and dwelt, unashamed and bewildered among men; uncertain of everything but this—that it was different from them.

Before he left Odense, his friends helped him find a place in

an old people's home for his mother, no longer as sturdy as she was, and he shared his bit of money with her. "Write me freely," Guldberg said, "and if you could get into the fourth class this October, it would be splendid, but don't lose courage if you can't."

It was not very long before Guldberg had to write: "How can you be so terrified of an examination! Would I could cry to you so that you were at once magnetised and electrified by it: Depart, thou demon of fear, out of this man!"

With his dragoon directness, the Colonel had gone straight to the point: a demon of fear had certainly long been making Hans Christian his headquarters; in fact he was the battlefield of at least two demons. The useful demon of ambition lured him perpetually on to announce: I can and will scale this mountain. But when he came to the attempt, the demon of fear was at his side. He kept on, however, though with clattering teeth and quaking knees. Ambition was stronger, but fear made him pay for every step. Not able to tell all his anguish to his friends, he kept a diary; or rather, when the lessons were conned and while the lone candle still burned, he jotted down notes and outcries, in a writing that wavered and wobbled with sleepiness.

He often used it for talking to God, urging Him to consider his good character, or at least his will to be good, and to help him just this once more. "God, God! Your will be done. Reward me according to my industry this year, no more. Unfortunate! Bad in Latin. You won't reach the Fourth class, or finish the school. Artisan or corpse: that is your destiny. O God, are you really there? Yes, still! Your name be praised—better luck in Latin grammar. Oh, why did I come so far, rise so high, unnoticed no longer, and now I must sink! Madness devour my brain that I may forget! Swell, oh heart, and burst! Big words, fool! To see my comrades rise, while I fall. To tear me from cultured society, God, no, that is too hard!"

He held out little baits to the Lord. If he got into the Fourth he would never doubt Him again. But of course he had perfect confidence, unless—"Don't rob me of my trust, God, my only Father! Gravely and solemnly I swear to You by my eternal

rest that I shan't grumble at You even if I have a hard time in the Fourth, if I may only get there!"

The examinations came, and left him gasping. "God, now my fate is decided but still hidden from me. What can be in store—God, my God, do not forsake me. My blood runs sharply through my veins, my nerves tremble. . . ." That afternoon he wrote again: "'You'll get there,' Mrs. Meisling whispered, the Rector smiled—and I got there. How strange, my joy is not so violent as I had thought. Went to a party at Pedersens, a roast joint, stewed apples with sheep's milk; played at picking a ring from a tumbler full of flour with the mouth. Home at eleven. Wrote Guldberg and my mother."

He was, odd as it seems, twenty years of age. But he was twenty, a quivering proud young man, and it is well to bear this in mind in looking over his shoulder as he writes to Collin, the day after the happy outcome. After various preliminaries:

"I have three things to ask you for, two of them I did not dare mention until I had good news to give you; but now that the examination has come out so well, I venture to do it, since I can turn to no one else—the first is a new pair of boots, because the pair I have is all in pieces; they have indeed been mended, still they let in water; neither are my shoes dry, except in good weather. I was silent as long as possible, it is so hard for me to ask; I feel that too much of that might weaken the noblest interest. Now that I shall probably get bad marks in the first months in the new class, I shall not dare to ask for anything at all, and meanwhile I haven't anything to put on my feet; therefore, seeing my great need, I hope to get the boots. The other thing I need very much indeed too, but it is also the most expensive; I nearly blush to mention it, but you won't get angry—think yourself in my place, and then you couldn't—but perhaps so many words will annoy you, so, to come to the point—may I get a new coat? I can no longer go anywhere with the old one, it is so worn and shabby and patched; and I can't come to Copenhagen for Christmas unless I have one decent thing to wear, for no matter how I save my only good coat which I got last year, it won't last any longer. God knows I find it hard to ask you for this, but I must, so do not be angry. The third thing is about text-books. . . ."

Collin of course at once authorised the necessary purchases; his possible anger was all in Hans Christian's tormenting imagination, but the pangs were real enough. Joy was keen, but pain, somehow, was keener.

Mrs. Meisling did not like housework. Large, fat, and indolent except when her own pungent pleasures were concerned, she would really have been happier digging her plump elbows into a cushion on a Copenhagen window-sill than she was in running a provincial household with a crotchety husband and four children. But she managed to pass most of her cares on to a housekeeper, a cook, and a housemaid, and as the rectorial salary was not exactly adequate to this, the couple cast about for ways and means. Quite early in the year 1825, they must have looked thoughtfully at Hans Christian. He was inoffensive, useful with the children, biddable, eager to please. Why should the widow Henneberg get the two hundred yearly *daler* guaranteed by Collin for his keep? It seemed a wilful waste of opportunity. Early that year the Rector's manner was milder with the boy, which Hans Christian naïvely attributed to belated appreciation. He was astounded, however, one day shortly before the examination, at the Rector's almost ostentatious kindness, and he was quite dumbfounded after the interview which the Rector's wife had with him the same day. She sent for him and in dulcet tones explained that her husband was really very fond of him, so much so that the Rector wanted him to join their household as a member of the family, and for the same money he was now paying the widow. The Rector would be able to help him with his Greek and Latin lessons, and, besides, there was a chance of his getting the headmastership of the school at Elsinore, a beautiful place, much nearer the capital. In that case he could come with them. All he had to do now was to ask Collin's permission.

He wrote, plainly holding his head while so doing: "I am of course delighted to have won the goodwill of a man who seemed to dislike me. Only last year he said, 'The last straw was to get him added to the other blockheads, to torment me!' Now he wants me in his family, and I haven't really improved so much, only done what I could. . . ." But he thought it would be wiser

to accept, although his heart bled at the idea of having to leave the widow.

Luckily Collin agreed to the proposal before the examination; and Hans Christian thus got into the Fourth as well as into the Meisling household.

He was given a little room with a separate entrance, but connecting with Mrs. Meisling's bedroom. She asked her husband to lock the door, and keep the key, as Slagelse was full of gossips and she valued her reputation. He did so, laughing loudly, but it was even more of a joke than he thought. The Rector was apparently the only person in the town who did not know precisely to what his lady's reputation amounted. In appearance she was plump, far from handsome, with red hair and false curls; in temperament she was light-hearted, audacious, and easy-going. She had impressed on her spouse that the children would disturb his rest unless he had his room in the attic. In the winter he went to bed at eight o'clock, made some punch and sipped it while his wife read aloud to him from Scott's novels. When he was asleep she left, always locking the door to the attic stairs, but it was opened so early in the morning that he never noticed. With him out of the way she was free to make strong punch for herself, or to dress up in peasant costume and saunter out to see what she could find. Once she told Hans Christian that she had gone out to the woods, and met all the officers of the town's regiment there. What a good time she had had!

But she also liked to tell him about her impossible maids; she never knew what they might be doing at night, and she might be blamed for it. She put straws in the door and looked in the morning to see if they had changed position. "My good reputation is my most precious jewel", she said.

Hans Christian's good-nature was everybody's refuge. He often had to read his lessons in a little room that served as a passage. The housekeeper would come and say, "We're living in a terrible house!" and then the cook arrived to assure him that "This is what you call hell on earth!" and soon after the maid appeared and began to lament that the mistress was jealous of her because So-and-so had spoken to her, and finally the mistress came and chased the maid away, bewailing these awful servants.

It was a new and very disturbing world that here dawned on Hans Christian. He had lived in the queer street in Copenhagen without knowing that anything was queer. His childlike innocence, and, still more, his strenuous poverty and single-minded ambitiousness had kept him so busy with mere living and striving that he had hitherto been practically unstirred by sex. Now he was twenty years of age. Even before he came into Meisling's house, there had been vaguely troubled words in his diary. "Away, temptress!" The blushing boy of twenty had piqued the Slagelse Messalina; she was fond of teasing him and of declaring, "He's got no real man in him!" One night she decided to try direct experiment. She came to him with a bowl of strong sweet punch; she plied him with it, she was kind and cajoling, then she wailed that she was getting thin; her clothes simply hung on her, they were so loose.

"Feel me!" she urged, but the poor fool only bowed and bowed to the Rector's lady. He was on pins and needles till he could escape, trembling in every fibre of his body. He fled to his own room, got into bed, and stammered his evening prayer, beseeching the Lord to make him good. But childlike naïveté was past.

One Sunday when he went to communion, as a little examination insurance, he was horrified to have the plump, red-haired lady undulate into his mind as he knelt before the altar. Although she had given up the direct method, she had irretrievably stirred him. He knew nothing of these worrying forces, but he suspected they were "sin", and when Nature forced him to seek relief in the way that so many poor solitaries must, he was overwhelmed by remorse each time, made elaborate vows and broke them.

His new home had other disadvantages. Cleanliness is common in Denmark and dirt is not, but the Meislings were exceptions in this as in many other things. The Rector's clothes looked as if he slept in them and shared his food with them, and he hardly ever even washed his hands. When he made punch he pressed a lemon, and then he had nice clean finger-tips. A broom was passed over the floors now and then, removing nothing. The neat Hans Christian suffered, but as the Rector was still kind to him, inviting him to play cards at night and

giving him occasional sweets, he wrote joyfully in the diary, "O God, how good You are; may I only keep the Rector's goodwill, may I be able to please him. O God, how happy I am; all is splendid in school".

The Rector's gentle period was brief. "I am getting along badly in school now, though I study hard; it is depressing, my soul is weak, takes its direction easily from others. Severity frightens it, friendliness fills it with love and gratitude. Would I were in my grave, death is so quiet; here always struggle and displeasure."

Why should he have to struggle, when he so often was tired, nervous, sick, tormented! "I believe I am a poet, that I will reach the heights, and, while believing it, another feeling cries to me that it is a mad idea." "Strange superficial creature that I am! Success gives me courage and strength to work—failure makes me melancholy, cowardly, dulled to all", and then in all humility he gives God a bit of advice: "God, forgive me if I judge Your ways, but a little more kindness would serve better to improve me".

He read a great deal, besides his lessons. Goethe, Schiller, Scott, Smollett, many German romantics, Heine, as well as all that he could get of Danish literature. But he read Byron's biography with utter absorption. "How he resembled me—even to gossiping. My soul is ambitious like his: only in being admired by all does it feel happy. The most insignificant person who does not do it can fill me with dejection. Glory is the spur of my poet's soul, but I feel myself that this is wrong and weak."

Glory. Admiration by all, even the least, only in this perfect effulgence could the shadows of poverty, madness, ugliness, and humiliation be vanquished. Then he would be humble, grateful, and good. He noted in passing that the cook had told someone she adored him; but a certain tailor's wife had cruelly undervalued him, and he poured out his hurt feelings to Guldberg, who affectionately thundered back and begged him not to be a reed in the wind and to tear the vice of vanity from his breast.

Vanity. The word confronted him often enough. Thirst for glory, he called it himself. But, glory or vanity, it had effective spurs. Much as he wanted to give up the struggle, now that

the old scowls and jeers had begun to rain on him in the classroom, he stuck to his books. Sundays, however, the Rector cleared up and was boisterously gay; he played with tin soldiers, wheeled Hans Christian in the pram, or he ordered all to play at forfeits and made the terrified boy kneel under a blanket to be kissed by Mrs. Meisling. Hans Christian closed his eyes and commended his soul to God.

Four small palaces of rococo design form a square in Copenhagen, near the freshness and living water of the harbour. With its connecting colonnades, it is a city poem of graceful simplicity. The lavender-grey buildings have an inimitable air, a style, a quiet elegance, the best of urbanity. In the year 1825, one of these palaces was used as the naval academy. The chief was Commander Wulff, whose wife had so often tried to get common sense into that charming, impossible creature, Hans Christian Andersen. But she made up for all her preaching by asking him to spend Christmas with them, nearly addling his head with joyful expectation. It was not disappointed. From the dubious atmosphere and dirt of the Meisling house, he soared to the capital for an enchanted week. He was given two rooms overlooking the royal square. A footman brought him up there, after he had been warmly received by the family, and presented with a handsomely bound Shakespeare. He leaned out of the high window. Across the way, tall sentries tramped across the shadowed snow in front of the King's residence. His emotions overflowed into the diary. "Six years ago I walked out there in the big square; no one knew me in the whole town, and now I can treat myself to Shakespeare in the home of a dear and well-known family. Lord, it is just like Aladdin: I too am sitting in the palace and looking down. Dear God! I know it, You won't desert me; I could kiss You!"

God, certainly, was one of his closest intimates. Not quite so close, but equally to be revered, was Collin, at whose house he presented himself next day. The bright, kind blue eyes of the State Councillor scrutinised the books of marks, and his industry was commended. Mrs. Collin talked to him about a play, and he liked her, and Ingeborg, the oldest daughter, joked with him in a friendly way; but the sons seemed distant.

He could not as yet feel at home among the Collins. They were kind, they were nothing if not simple and unaffected, but they did not somehow have the air of taking him seriously. Still he had enough other friends to tell that he was now really in the fourth class. Among them was Oehlenschlaeger, the poet-king, who listened benevolently while the youth read aloud some of his productions. He praised them. "Am I for the tragic or the comic?" panted Hans Christian. Oehlenschlaeger smiled and said he thought the latter. It was heaven, except for a daily obligatory call on Meisling, who used him for errands, and who was colder and grumpier than usual.

The students in the Fourth had nearly all been in love, not only once but several times, and Hans Christian felt that he owed it to the class and to his standing as a poet to go and do likewise. The author most adored by him was Oehlenschlaeger, and he thought it appropriate to adore Charlotte, his fourteen-year-old daughter, called Lotte, a gay young thing who had lavished kindling smiles on him, of whatever kind. He began by staring long and fixedly at her; he did so want to be in love, but he remained calm, yet his gaze was noticed; he heard people whisper, "He's in love with Lotte". Now he believed it; though a little amazed that love could be arranged like that, by will-power.

The Commander and his wife were giving a big ball for the cadets, the royal family was coming, and Lotte was coming. Hans Christian had an invitation too; he sat in his room looking at the nice new blue coat he had just got in Slagelse. Would it do? Carriages rolled below; he made himself as festive as possible. He was going to try to dance. The gilded ballroom shone in the light of the many chandeliers. He saw the cadets doing a sword-dance for the King; their ease and grace discouraged him—never could he approximate them. He noticed Wulff look at him, then whisper to his wife. He went to her and asked frankly, was it his coat. She smiled, "Well, if you have a frock-coat, perhaps it would be better.—" He flew to his room—there was only the old grey coat he had been wearing in school, but he brushed it half asunder, put it on, and came down again. Now everybody had arrived, and, dear Lord, all the men were in black, black from head to foot. Only he was

in grey! He felt naked with embarrassment and slipped into a window-niche, half hidden behind the curtains. No one noticed



SILHOUETTE BY H. C. ANDERSEN

him except Oehlenschlaeger, who walked clear across the room to shake his hand; he could have knelt to him. Ingeborg Collin too was nice; she nodded gaily to him, but what was the use. "People will take me for a waiter," he thought, "and is Lotte to see me!" The old grey coat burned on him; soon he escaped back to his room, and lay there crying while the carriages rumbled back and forth below. "O God," he prayed, "please do let me get a black frock-coat sometime, and become somebody worth while!" He cried himself

asleep. Next morning he pleaded he had had a headache. The anguish of the grey coat seemed to have scared away his feelings for Lotte, and now the time had come for returning to Slagelse.

The day before, he went as usual to Meisling for orders. He found a letter addressed to him, the gist of which was that the Rector warned him not to be wasting his time writing poetry and getting laughed at for reading it aloud. He would have several things to tell him later, which, depend on it, would have a cooling effect.

Half consoled by the Wulffs when he started for Slagelse, Hans Christian had made himself utterly unhappy when he got there, wondering what the cold douche was to be. It was New Year's Eve. When he arrived he was told to go to bed at once. He felt certain he was being prevented from playing with the children. Next morning the maids informed him luridly why they were all got out of the way early; the mistress raged futilely at them, and he recognised the familiar atmosphere, doubly

repugnant after the holidays. He waited a miserable week for Meisling to return, coddling the thought of suicide. But when the Rector came, he had got over his rage—oh yes, there was something, what was it? Oh, Oehlenschlaeger had told him that young Andersen had read his poems to him and the poor boy thought every smile one of approval and flattery. And, Meisling added, why could not Hans Christian read him his verses; he too was a poet!

The douche was cold, yet not fatal. The Rector now forbade him the company of the few remaining families that were not on the proscribed list as detractors of the virtuous Mrs. Meisling. He forbade him anything and everything, even walks, even church, except his lessons. Hans Christian was so obedient that the Rector could not bite, only growl. There was also the little circumstance that he was to go to Elsinore in June, as Rector for the secondary school there, and it was necessary to get Hans Christian to ask Collin's permission to be transferred, together with the two hundred yearly *daler* for his keep. He became almost gentle, and helped with the Latin composition. Hans Christian asked for and got Collin's permission to go to Elsinore. It was, of course, nearer to Copenhagen, but there were many real pangs at the idea of leaving Slagelse. He went on a tender round of his friends, getting many pages of his little album filled with stiff little drawings, stiff little verses, and soft sentiments about muses and poetry. Life was full of the rich melancholy of parting and the tingling anticipation of novelty.

CHAPTER VIII

IT took three days by mail-coach to reach Elsinore, a distance of about fifty-five miles, but Hans Christian felt like a bird in the air. This was travel, this was the dream of his life. New towns, cathedral spires, blue waters, villages, forests in their brightest spring green, and an ancient castle by moonlight set in a wide moat. One of the greatest joys of the blessed in heaven must be, he concluded, their freedom to visit all the loveliness of the earth.

Elsinore was the fitting climax: a small town, but with fine patrician houses, handsome old churches, a graceful palace, and the exquisite and stately castle of Kronborg overlooking the Sound. The Sound itself, swift water in many colours, carrying ships with towering white sails from all the world; this gave to the town that sense of illimitable life which only seaports have, and which none more than Hans Christian was fitted by temperament to savour. Enchanted, he let his pen fly in a long letter to a friend, describing the picturesque journey and the delights of Elsinore: here a big English ship with coal, there brown Italians, here phlegmatic Dutchmen, and there a boat with blonde Swedish girls. To crown and top it all, the King came visiting, the town was garlanded, the ships beflagged, and a French circus gave free performances. He thought the letter so good that he simply copied it for the rest of his friends. Unfortunately one of the friends thought it so good that he had it published. The recipients began comparing notes; it was probably the only time Hans Christian really resented publication.

However, there were topics enough for letters; he was generous with joy as well as with grief, and it looked as if Elsinore were the happy opposite of Slagelse in every way. The school was bigger, brighter, friendlier, and merrier. The teachers were smarter in their clothes; two of them were officers in uniform, "like a French university in the time of Napoleon", Hans Christian wrote. Much to his delighted surprise, he found himself a star in mathematics, which was not as well taught here as

it had been in Slagelse. He was asked to help the others; he was praised; he improved brilliantly, and he once more hurried to note that in his case praise only made him strive to be worthy of it, and certainly not vain. Soon the other students also came to him with their compositions for help, "but not too good, or it will be noticed".

The Meisling family also seemed to have left their oddities behind them. The Rector, at least at the start, wore a frock-coat and invited the teachers to his house. He took walks with Hans Christian and showed him the beauty of the country; the jocular side of his nature was uppermost. As for Mrs. Meisling, she was delighted; the ladies of the town's elite called on her in a body. Hans Christian happened to be present when they came. He heard her say how happy she was to have left Slagelse, "a terrible place, full of slander and malice; no decent woman was safe from their tongues. You ought to hear what they said about me"—and then to Hans Christian's horror she actually told them one scandalous thing about herself after the other, all true. The poor ladies blushed and curtsied and knew not where to look. When they had escaped, and Hans Christian had recovered from his petrification, he asked her the reason for this. She laughed. "It's better for them to hear it from my mouth than from strangers; if I say it they won't believe it!"

A few weeks passed thus to the merry tune of "life is splendid, O how happy I am!" There was a brief gay visit to Copenhagen. Mrs. Wulff congratulated him on his courage and took the chance to slip some more advice into her letters. He must not read his works aloud; he must realise that many people only laughed at him for it, and besides, Meisling disapproved of it. But Meisling ought to provide him with some instruction in dancing that would serve to correct his physical awkwardness, and if he were her own son, she would say this.

The idea of Meisling's being concerned about the company manners of Hans Christian's big hands and feet did credit to the sound motherly friendship of Mrs. Wulff, but it must have made the youth laugh bitterly. The Slagelse atmosphere had not after all been left behind; there it was, a stench of anger and disorder now overcoming the glamour of novelty. The spouses soon began to quarrel. Piggishness, irritability, and dubiety of

every kind ruled in the house again. Hans Christian and a temporary student boarder were often made to eat off the same plate, which had to do duty both for the porridge and the meat—"all this splashing and washing wear the things out", Meisling averred. One night, to Hans Christian's fright, Mrs. Meisling appeared, by way of the window and a ladder, in his bedroom, which was then the school library. The lady, clad in her nightgown, had come to steal butter from herself. Having rowed the maids for using too much, she had bet that she could do with a certain amount for the week, and the rest had been locked up in the library, so she secretly helped herself. Often she brought the two boys coffee in the middle of the night, waking up Hans Christian, who drank it and promptly went to sleep again. Her Elsinore reputation soon began to resemble the spotty one from Slagelse, and altercations flourished between her and her husband and of course the maids.

Meisling grew morose and irascible and left off his manners with the frock-coat. Soon relations between him and the teachers stiffened and broke; but they were less timid than his former associates, and he was unable to bully them to his heart's content. But there was always Hans Christian, now the sole boarder. At meals the Rector treated him either to sour silence or to complaints, even before strangers, that two hundred *daler* a year was not enough on which to lodge and board a boy with such a terrible appetite. He was given less food and of poorer quality, and even it was grudged him. "You certainly know how to help yourself", Meisling said caustically, if he cut a fair slice of the boiled meat.

The classroom nightmare had also begun again, not with the other teachers but with Meisling, who for two hours every day led him the dance of those dread skeletons of language, Greek and Latin grammar; two hours of heated assurances that he had never been so stupid, and that it was extremely doubtful whether there was any use in teaching him at all. It must be said that ill-temper was not the only cause of these verdicts; within less than two years Hans Christian would have to pass his final examinations for the university, and the Rector knew that Greek and Latin were essential. He could thus release his anger with a good conscience, and as this had the invariable

effect of making Hans Christian stumble still more, his conscience was even better. The note of sincerity in the Rector's voice nearly convinced the boy that he was an idiot. He told Collin so earnestly of his shortcomings and of the Rector's just discontent with him, that Collin, worried at last, secretly asked Meisling for a statement. The Rector, at the very time when he was assuring Hans Christian that his understanding was below that of the brute beasts, sent a letter to Collin in which he warmly praised H. C. Andersen's abilities, industry, excellent behaviour, lovable good-nature, honesty, talent, imagination, and emotional richness. It led up, perhaps significantly, to the statement that Hans Christian was fully worthy of the money spent on his support; but, even supposing this to be the crux of the matter, no merely brutal pedant could have written this letter, so full of real perception. Collin therefore quite naturally thought that Hans Christian's sensitiveness was getting the better of him, and wrote the boy a few friendly lines, saying not to lose courage, the Rector might have an odd way with him, but his intentions were good.

That the Rector's intentions were good, was also Colonel Guldberg's much more lengthily expressed opinion. He urged a heart-to-heart talk with him. Hans Christian did not feel equal to this, but he sat down and wrote Meisling a letter, beseeching him not to throw it aside before he had read it, and desperately trying to explain his own "confused, superficial, and frivolous character". He gave a sketch of his life, a feat indeed in which he was well practised, but this time he did it with surprising realism and humility; earnestly attempting to show how little this life had fitted him for serious study. He implored him for a gleam of hope and begged not to be despised because he implored: it was his career, his whole welfare, that was at stake.

No one except the morbidly cruel could have resisted this, and Meisling was not of those; he was a coarse-grained, choleric pedant, harassed and driven by his own instincts and by his wife's peculiarities, but he had moments of sanity and sympathy, and he told Hans Christian nicely enough that his severity was not ill meant. It was to protect them both from being in a bad fix when the hour of trial came, the university examination. In the following days he was gentler in class, and got more sensible

replies from Hans Christian, who lost no time in telling Collin that all was now well.

Yet, as he often said himself, "the least little thing rejoices my soul, but let the wind blow at all sharply and my eyes fill with tears", and this inviting sensitiveness was too much for the Rector. The rest of the class was able to oppose a stolid school-boy front to him, since the Dane although sensitive is usually able to command his features; but for Hans Christian this was an impossibility. Here was this long cowering creature, then, who, if you please, mixed in Copenhagen society and thought he was a poet, and could not even master the subjunctive! Meisling again seemed to feel it his mission to convince Hans Christian that he was utterly worthless, a reprehensible and ridiculous ass. Feverishly the youth trembled on the classroom bench, could not answer; dared not answer, dared not meet the staring angry eyes of the Rector; wished he might die so as not to hear the jeers at his awkward ugly person, his imbecility. When school was over, and the others could escape, there he was, still in the radius of contempt. All excursions were forbidden, and friends discouraged. He had to sit in the stuffy classroom while the heat lasted. No one dared to come to see him; they did not care to meet the Rector.

At night in his little room, where he was only allowed the scantiest possible fire and where he "froze like a Spaniard", he knew the darkest and bitterest hours of his life. In his letters to his friends he did mention the Rector's severity, but only as a proof of his own unworthiness and stupidity, and they took his despair as unmanly sensitiveness. When he also mentioned his woe at the thought that now he might never become "great" and thus justify their care, they were annoyed. Mrs. Wulff adjured him time and again to wake up and not develop illusions about himself—"you're always writing about yourSELF, your-SELF, yourSELF!" How would it be if she got the fixed idea and tried to force it on everybody that she was Empress of Brazil? Yet it was just as foolish for him to talk of striving for poetic fame. All his little plays and poems, and the Lord knows what, were alike and no one took them seriously. He was a schoolboy and ought to study; there was his duty, and he ought not to look beyond.

Her letters were well meant, really well meant, not in the sinister significance of that phrase. She was a very busy woman, and yet she took time to write him long letters; not only of advice but of sincere encouragement, often stressing his pure heart, unselfish goodness, and admirable industry.

Hans Christian liked the idea of being good and pure, and he knew he was industrious, but the one anchor to which he clung was just the one they all thought it best to take away from him: the hope, or illusion, that he was destined to greatness. And how could he contradict them when he knew as well as they did that his plays and poems were unripe, imitative, soft little wails. Mrs. Wulff was right. Sitting there, in the bleak cold room, acutely aware of being in the house of a man who despised him, grudging food and warmth and liberty, without friends whom he could approach as equals, he touched the bottom of despair. The great vague goal he had lived for must be vanity, madness. He remembered his grandfather singing through the streets, decked in flowers and feathers. Why had he ever left Odense? Why had he not died when he was a happy credulous child in his mother's arms? Hot tears warmed his cheek. He saw himself clearly, dying so; he heard the child speak, he wrote it down. It was his first real poem: a child's own simple words, unaware of tragedy and therefore powerfully conveying it. At the bottom of despair he found the well of hope again, and drank in the life-giving dream of greatness.

Having savoured the joy of creation, he was seized with panic at the illicitness of it. He confessed his sin to Collin; he even confessed it to Meisling. No doubt there was more hope than remorse in those confessions. He knew it was a good poem this time. But the overburdened State Councillor merely urged him to stick to his studies, and Meisling raged worse than ever. "You haven't the very least trace of talent! Do you think that if there was one spark of poetry in you that I wouldn't notice it? I am a poet myself, I know right well what poetry is. Silly, drivelling, mad idiocy is what is the matter with you! If you had one poetic idea, by the Lord I'd encourage you, I'd forgive you for being an ass in school; but all it amounts to is a fixed idea. That will land you in a lunatic asylum. Suppose you did publish—people would laugh at you——!"

Every word sank like lead into Hans Christian. He was appalled by the greenish glare in the angry eyes of the Rector, who continued: "Tell me a single poem, a single line of real poetry produced by your empty brain! You can only blubber, you have no real feeling. Your imagination is of the lunatic sort, and I won't even mention your understanding. Tell me, have you written one real poem?"

Hans Christian could only sob, but Meisling read his thoughts. "Your 'Dying Child' is the kind of thing that every puling water-closet poet could produce!"

In class the perorations were similar. Hans Christian ought to be put in a glass case in a museum to talk Greek; how the people would flock there! He was a person without feeling or honour, otherwise he would improve in his lessons, or else chase himself, as the Rector wished.

The firing kept up at the table. "I am heartily sick of you, and besides I know you can't forgive me for having told you the truth."

Wholly convinced that Meisling hated him, and more than half convinced of his own academic worthlessness, Hans Christian begged Collin to make an end of his misery and his hopes by getting him any kind of humble job, preferably in the distant colonies. At the foot of the page there was a cry, "Help me, benefactor, here I can only become a derelict!"

Collin caught the note of something being really wrong, and as a friend dropped a hint to him that it was not all Hans Christian's imagination, the State Councillor wrote the Rector an icily polite request for information concerning young Andersen—was he so hopelessly bad?

Meisling answered, hotly impolite, his writing full of angry horns and tails, that pedagogues had in common with artists that they resented being watched. This and various heavy sarcasms brought a sharp retort in Collin's small clear writing that he was not interested in comparisons between pedagogues and artists, and that if the Rector did not want to keep Andersen in his house, he must give fair notice of it.

Clutching this letter, Meisling rushed to Hans Christian's room, and roared that he had accused him to Collin, and he

could pack his traps and get out that instant. Hans Christian did begin to pack, seeing which Meisling suddenly changed. He had not really meant it, he said, and admitted he had been a little violent. In the future he would try to help him more with his Latin, and now they would start afresh.

Needless to say, the change for the better was of the briefest, and soon the rush and whirl of invective and abuse was the same. But this time there was a new factor. A new teacher of Hebrew had come, a student of theology, Werliin by name. He had once been a pupil of Meisling's, and the Rector insisted on his being at the house every Sunday. It was not long before the serious young man began to take notice of many things. At the table he saw the grudging way in which Hans Christian was served, and heard him being roughly scolded for having begged an extra log for his stove, "when we're losing money on you as it is!" Nor was it long before Mrs. Meisling and her maid, even before the stranger, again began their giggling game of trying to embarrass Hans Christian by loose words and gestures. This decided Werliin. Cautiously but clearly, he spoke to the boy, advising him in the coming Easter holidays to explain his situation once more to Collin, and promising to plead his cause himself. At this unexpected sympathy, Hans Christian broke down and poured out all his grief at having to leave the academic career; for surely he could never pass the university examinations, and he could never amount to anything without that. Werliin consoled him, assuring him that he was far from stupid and that he certainly would amount to something. This so encouraged Hans Christian that he even did well in Hebrew, while the first cold months of 1827 went by warmed by the hope of Easter.

At last the time came. He went to Collin and repeated the story of his difficulties in learning and of the Rector's harshness. The State Councillor looked away from the realm's disordered finances, from the Greenland problem, the forestry and veterinary problems, from the many industries he was trying to start in the wrecked country, and once more tried to fathom what might be best for the appealing but rather worrisome youth before him. Clearly the Rector was too severe, but boys ought to learn endurance. He smiled on Hans Christian, spoke

comforting words, but told him to stick it. A change at this stage would be inadvisable.

Hans Christian had scarcely time to drag back to the Wulffs', where he was staying, and to be thoroughly unhappy, before word came from Collin that he had decided he must leave Meisling's house and school immediately and be privately tutored in Copenhagen.

Werliin had been to see him.

The innate delicacy of Hans Christian had kept him from ever writing a word of the worst of his trials, the moral and material dirt in which he was forced to live; his complaints had always been of himself, of his own supposed stupidity, and this in a way made the information given by the outsider all the more impressive. Collin instantly reversed his decision; accepting Werliin's suggestion that a friend of his should tutor the boy, and writing Meisling a letter to the effect that Andersen would be better off in Copenhagen.

He then, characteristically, asked Hans Christian to return to Elsinore, so as to part with Meisling in the best and most amicable way. Hans Christian would always go to any lengths to reconcile himself with people, but he had his doubts in this case. However, he went back to the school. The Rector was not at home when he got there, arriving much to Mrs. Meisling's inconvenience, as she had not expected him so early. He broke the news to her. She felt badly, being at bottom a good-hearted wench, and at once suggested that they should walk together in the streets so that people would not think they were parting as enemies.

When the Rector came, he had no such scruples. "You still here?" he inquired as Hans Christian helped him out of the mail-coach. "When are you going?" "To-morrow morning." To this there was no answer, nor did he see the Rector again until the next morning, when he faltered into his study for the parting. "I want to say good-bye to you now," Hans Christian stammered, feeling unexpectedly moved, "and thank you for all the good you have done for me."

"You can go to hell!" were the Rector's only farewell words, the best indeed under the circumstances, the kind that release from unreal gratitude.

Hans Christian hopped into the yellow mail-coach, the scarlet-coated driver blew the royal post-horn; Mrs. Meisling and his fellow-students waved; he waved energetically back; and away he rolled to re-enter Copenhagen, and to begin the chapter of young manhood.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN he opened the dormer window of the attic room which was now his lodging in Copenhagen, he had a wide bright view over red-tiled roofs slanting in all directions, a gleam of canals, and a glimpse of shipping, church spires, and castle towers. Only about three or four people could stand comfortably in the room, but the landlady was respectable and the view was royal. He leaned out, facing the May sunset, and raptly watched cloud mountains sailing by in many colours, while he dreamed brilliant futures to the inciting tunes of a hurdy-gurdy far below. Then he sat down and mended a rip in his good coat; he always took it off as soon as he came home, putting on the old one. There was also a sock to be darned, but as he could not exactly darn, he cut a patch out of a worn-out sock and skilfully sewed it on the hole. He had not made clothes for marionettes in vain, and if he could not be either beautiful or well dressed, he was resolved to be neat. Rather than not have his linen of the whitest, he spent on laundry what he might have spent on food. But his demands were few. In the wall there was a cupboard which he now opened, and whence he took out bread, butter, and sausage. Tranquilly he ate his supper by himself, freer than he had ever felt before, and happier. His breakfasts were solved in the same simple way, and his dinners were provided by six of his friends, at whose houses he ate in turn, the Wulffs on Monday, the Collins on Tuesday, and so on, a customary favour to poor students. Everywhere he was treated with unaffected kindness, and in at least two of the homes he really felt a personal relationship.

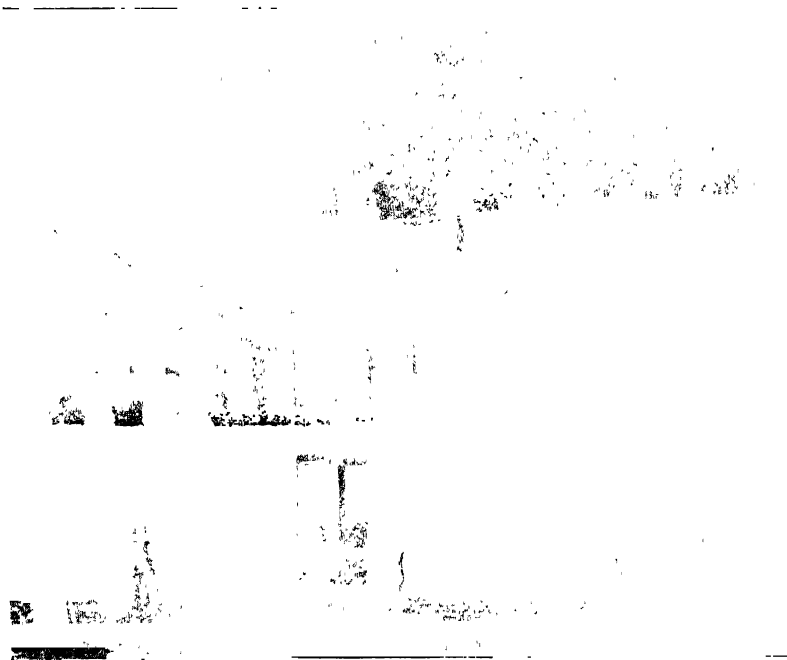
One of these was Commander Wulff's. Although he stood in sincere awe of the Commander, and although Mrs. Wulff gave him many unpleasant and far from sugar-coated pills for the good of his character and manners, yet he knew it was well meant, and he had one true confederate in the family, Henriette, one of the two daughters. She was about his own age, clever and

sensitive, but a hunchback, which gave him the immense help of being able to feel sorry for her. It was usually the other way about. But Henriette was not sorry for herself; neither would she let him wallow in any kind of sadness; she met sighs of despair with laughter and badinage. She loved a piece of gossip, exactly as he did, if it had humour and human interest; and they had always many secret jokes to tell or write each other. She would listen, however, to his real woes, and she would let none of their fashionable circle make unkind fun of him. The lanky youth, already at his full supernormal height, with barge-like feet, with sensibilities quivering incessantly around him, was oddly squired by the little quipping girl, deformed, and so small as to seem almost a dwarf. But she had a fighting spirit which she used for him, and he was deeply grateful to her. "You are the only one who never makes me feel what a lowly wretch I am."

He quite honestly meant this, as he meant it in each case when he wrote to different people, "You are the only one in whom I can confide", or turn to, or lean on. He could feel so warmly close to the person in question that he or she was for the moment the only one; with, of course, the faint hopeful undercurrent that telling people they are thus or so may help them to become it. Henriette Wulff was not the only one who never made him feel his lowly origin. At the Collins' he was really introduced into the family circle. Old Collin never did things by halves. Prosy official and administrator though he was, he had divined the spark of real poetry in the neglected and bizarre boy that once trembled before him, and having taken on the responsibility for him, he did not doff it. What was the good of merely providing instruction and food and shelter for him? He needed a home. In Meisling's house he might have been utterly ruined; it had been the wrong place. Undoubtedly Collin now felt obliged to provide the right place, and he knew no better than his own home. His deaf and invalidish wife was not very clever, but she was simple goodness itself; she would never object. Absolute though easy and benevolent autocrat of the family, who both adored and revered him, he had but to say to his five children: This youth is to come here every day if he likes, and he is to be treated as a brother—and the thing was

done. He had but to take Edvard, his most sensible son, aside, and tell him to befriend young Andersen, and Edvard would do so.

The fiat was spoken, and the most exclusive circle in Copenhagen opened and took in Hans Christian. It was not exclusive in any worldly sense: the Collins were neither fashionable nor wealthy; here it was the world which was shut out. The Collins



THE COLLIN HOME IN COPENHAGEN

were a world to themselves, with only the immediate relatives and a few old friends admitted. They cared not at all for "society", and a great deal for their own society. They had family puns, family jokes, and family allusions; such a whirl of them that it amounted to a special language, often quite nonsensical to outsiders. Most of it was made up of quotations from plays, operas, and vaudevilles; they had a free box at the theatre, which was their chief interest and amusement, as it was that of all Copenhagen. Any remark whatever among the

Collins might touch off a quotation, a pun, or a family joke, rewarded by bursts of laughter and counter-jokes. Hans Christian had never before been in such an atmosphere of lightness, brightness, youth, and mirth. It attracted and dazzled him; but he blinked a bit owlishly—he had never been young in this way; it seemed to him indeed that he never had been young.

At first he did not feel quite at ease. He had the unreasoning fear of laughter which the lonely, sensitive, and awkward naturally have. It took him some time to learn the jargon and to join in the general teasing campaign. Meanwhile Louise was the one among the five children who was most understandingly kind. Only fifteen, she had a half-childlike charm, and with that a womanly tenderness. She could see that the new-comer in the circle was timid and suffered from fancied slights or rough teasing, and she used her kind eyes, soft voice, and gentle manners to reassure him. Ingeborg, full of brusque jollity and real goodness, was newly married and not so much at home. Of the three sons, Theodor was a child, and Gottlieb not very forthcoming. Edvard, who had the bright blue eyes of his father, but who unlike him seemed cool, distant, and correct, was nevertheless the one who curiously attracted Hans Christian. Edvard had more to do with him than the rest; he had been told off to befriend him, and at present it took the form of helping him with the Latin compositions. Hans Christian was yearning wildly for a strong silent friend of his own age; but on the whole, he told himself, he rather disliked this O so well-balanced Edvard, whose grammar and spelling were so perfect—so perfectly in contrast to his own.

But, after all, this was not a great flaw in the precious joy of again living in Copenhagen, where the very air excited him, and the things and the people daily stirred his endless interest in the human scene. True, he was not supposed to be watching this scene too much, and still less to take a part in it other than that of an intently studious young man with a decisive examination looming ahead. Mrs. Wulff, although she had agreed that Meisling's house had been no fit place for him, had, frankly as usual, spoken her doubt about the wisdom of plunging Hans Christian back into his dear Copenhagen. There will be a great deal of visiting done, she said, and very few lessons, to

which the Commander vigorously assented. But they were not altogether right. Hans Christian had a sure instinct for the really crucial times in his life, and he knew it was now or never. Every day, sometimes twice a day, he walked over to see Müller, his tutor, across the harbour canals, past the ships lying outside the beautiful old Bourse, and along by the trees of the fortifications. Müller was an earnest and learned young man of his own age, sensitive and conscientious with his charge. A born teacher, he knew how to stir up interest and start up arguments; he was one of the first of the Danish teachers who believed much more in the "living" than in the printed word, and Hans Christian responded eagerly. It was very different from Meisling's mallet on his head, and he tumbled into free discussion like a colt into a spring meadow. He now aired his opinions with so much of his natural tendency to persiflage that on one point at least he deeply worried his tutor. Hans Christian was anything but orthodox in the matter of the evangelical Lutheran religion, and Müller belonged to a small group dubbed the sanctified ones, whose leader was Grundtvig, and who took the Bible as verbally inspired, especially in its darker aspects. As he was fond of Hans Christian, he could only try to save his soul, which he saw as in danger of damnation chiefly because he refused to believe in damnation.

Hans Christian's rationalist father had bequeathed his outlook to his son, and this had been strengthened by his teacher of religion in Slagelse, a free-minded man, under whose influence he had once written a piece on True Christianity while a great glow warmed his soul. Although his idea of God for practical purposes was that of a Fairy Godfather who was to help and protect little Hans Christian, and sometimes even that of a God of Luck who was to favour him, yet this young composition did flower from the very roots of his heart.

He pointed out that even the Greeks made love bring order out of chaos, and that the whole gist of the teaching of Jesus was love. "Oh, if we could only learn not to judge others so harshly; if we could read in their hearts as we can read our own, how little we would condemn them, but realise that circumstances, passions, and misunderstandings are to blame for most of the evil in the world!"

"Oh, if we could only learn not to judge others so harshly!" Certainly Hans Christian put in a word for himself there, but equally certainly he put it in for others too. He shuddered away from any kind of cruelty, and he was really shocked to discover that the gentle Müller believed in hell everlasting.

"How can you", he said to the tutor, "contrary to the words of Jesus Himself, make God a severe Master who punishes with eternal fire because man has not been able to struggle against a sinful nature, most of which he has been born with?"

Müller's long flattish chin drooped and his earnest bulging brow darkened while he sought for an answer. Not finding any, he said, "Well, that sounds very true, but don't you think it is the Evil one speaking through you? He always helps his own."

Hans Christian waved his long arms. "But I'm saying that there is no devil, he's only symbolic. A good God cannot possibly torture sinners eternally. You quite rightly say that I am but a sinful human being, but even I couldn't treat my enemy so, so how could God?"

Müller fell back on the last theological defences: "Holy Writ says so, and God Himself cannot lie".

Hans Christian considered the battle gained, but it was often refought. Müller felt responsible for his salvation, and he brought in some of his holy confederates, Grundtvig among them, but the future bishop disgusted Hans Christian by speaking ill of Byron, and when another apostle attempted to convert him, he simply took his books and left before hell-fire could be opened on him.

Meanwhile, apart from theology, he was really progressing with his studies, and he began to carry out some of Mrs. Wulff's prediction about the way he would behave in Copenhagen: in other words, he did go visiting a great deal; he did flutter around with poems he somehow happened to have in his pocket and could be persuaded to read aloud.

Tall, thin, and twenty-two, he was still very much the tow-headed boy who had amused Odense by his readiness to perform. He amused Copenhagen still more by his artlessness in taking their applause seriously. In vain did Mrs. Wulff earnestly warn him that he declaimed German badly and Danish worse,

that people laughed at his provincial pronunciation. It was even in vain that Collin, getting a little weary of performances in his own house, hinted at self-restraint. Hans Christian could not resist any chance to be the centre of things, to be the one to hold forth, to be noticed. "Ah, to be noticed is the nicest thing in the world, isn't it?" Mrs. Wulff would smile, and he would writhe and try to struggle, but the limelight drew him, and the unquenchable thirst for praise.

Praise, appreciation, reassurance of his worth—after Slagelse and Elsinore the need for the doubt-dispelling manna was fierce enough to make him seek it anywhere and at nearly any cost, with a blind eye and a deaf ear to the equivocal in society's glance or word.

In this he was not so horribly different as his friends thought from writers big and little of all ages. Just about this time Leopardi was writing that an institute should be founded in which authors could read their efforts aloud to listeners paid according to a fixed tariff, so much per hour for prose, twice as much for poetry, the money to be returned if the listener fell asleep, and medical attendance available for listeners who might faint or have fits.

So far Hans Christian had at most a mild lyric or a little humoristic verse to deliver himself of, and they were not always bad. Once at the house of a wealthy family where the usual genteel entertainment was being given—young ladies warbled, a promising pianist improvised—someone nudged someone and whispered that it was a great lark to hear Andersen recite his poems. The request was merely breathed, and he stepped forward, but his poem was so sincere and he spoke it so naturally that smiles had to change into appreciation of something real.

That glint of something real in Hans Christian, which was far more in the manner than in the matter, was what had always conquered people for him, not his own naïve attempts to attract attention. At one of his weekly dinners in the physicist Ørsted's house, he manœuvred himself next to a handsome elegant man, Heiberg, who had brought the vaudeville to Denmark, and who was the editor of a powerful literary paper. Result: two of Hans Christian's poems were published in Heiberg's paper, the *Flying Post*.

They were signed only with a small "h", but that gave him the added thrill of revealing his identity. Except in one place. At Commander Wulff's he was sufficiently in awe of the master of the house really to hide his poetic light under a bushel, only inviting his dearest friend, little hunchback Henriette, in under the bushel. The Commander in his most naval voice had often agreed with his wife that poetising was practically criminal in this time of study; and he had even been very sceptical whether Hans Christian had any creative ability at all, which of course made the youth feel that he was eating his weekly dinner there under false pretences, and gave Henriette much work to console him. On the day when the poems appeared, he was at their house, when the Commander came in with the *Flying Post* in his hand, announcing that there was something really good in this number. And he read aloud Hans Christian's poems. Hardly had he finished when his daughter burst out, "Now, those are by Andersen!"

Wulff said nothing, but his mien was dark and, still silent, he left the room. Hans Christian was hurt out of all proportion, not realising that naval commanders must preserve their dignity. His dependence oppressed him, and as the examination drew nearer, he fell into the darkest moods. If he failed, how could he ever show his face again? Other students who failed would only disappoint their own family, but he! Henriette Wulff was the only one to whom he dared despair. He had some friends of his own age, young men whom he had known in school, but they laughed enough at him on the score of his unbelievable innocence, though they had concluded that his naïveté was so genuine that "it would be a pity to seduce him".

It would have been difficult as well as a pity; because, when he was not shivering with examination fever, he was interested only in the favours of Fame, for whose conquest he was meditating a work in prose. He was not afraid to confess to Henriette Wulff that now and then he wrote a scrap of it, and this though the examination prospects were really serious. His tutor declared that failure was certain, and Collin shook his head; he could not ask the King for more support. Another tutor was tried for the sore spot of Latin composition, and the remedy worked. In October 1828 Hans Christian went up for examination—and he

passed. Not without terrific emotions, a nose-bleed, and a swoon, and not at the top, but quite respectably towards the middle.

The manner of his passing mattered far less to him, however, than the great and releasing fact itself. Now he had a standing; he was a citizen in the academic community. "The cadet who becomes officer, the schoolboy who graduates, the apprentice who becomes journeyman; they all know this freeing of their wings . . . it is the first time the youthful soul feels its freedom; it yearns to act; it understands itself; it has been weighed and not found wanting . . . not love, science, art, so electrify the nerves as this: now I am a university student!"

Matriculation at the University of Copenhagen was in itself a degree. The man who sought any kind of State position had to have it, though a second examination had to be passed before study for a profession could begin.

To Hans Christian, however, it meant above all the license to write. All the patrons and friends were smiling and congratulatory; the second examination was a whole year off. He felt free to finish the work he had been secretly composing, mostly in his head, as he walked back from his tutor's house, past the fantastic spires and many memories of the old part of Copenhagen.

Quite naturally it took the form of a walk in which the things he saw and the ideas they started in him were the slender strand of plot; but if the plot were slender the ideas came like a long-dammed-up river suddenly set free; good, bad, and indifferent, but all with a dancing verve that proved the real pressure behind them. This pressure was not primarily Hans Christian's lust for fame, helpful as that was. He could not but write: his day-dreams were so real to him that they had to be expressed, had to be materialised in writing before they would give him peace. It had cost him really heroic effort to hold himself to the dry-as-dust studying of that period, and to do it effectively enough to pass a stiff examination. Of course, he had wailed and wriggled, but the saving toughness in him made him stick it. Now the sluice-gates were open.

Into *A Walking Trip from Holmens Kanal to the East Point of*

Amager, he poured everything. It was in fact a pre-Joycian experiment in free association, supposed to take place in one night; a section of what the mind's current carried with it of observation, fantasy, memory, and feelings, taken at a time when the sunlight of youth and high spirits made it all glitter. It was in prose, a gay, conversational prose, but dotted with humoristic poems, some of which had indeed once been written seriously and tearfully, but were now given a slight twist and included as parodies of sentimentality, the charge he had learned to fear. It was distressingly literary in spots, as if he must pour out helter-skelter all he had read of modern and classic writers, whom he also quite frankly imitated; but whatever he touched he vivified, showing for the first time his gift of personification—were it poetry, prose, fishes, death, St. Peter, cats, books, towers, the Wandering Jew, even characters in other people's books—each became a convincing creature speaking for himself. There was life in it: there were many bits of his own life, remarks bearing their own addresses very plainly, ironic packages for Meisling and others, and some for himself. And there was one for all his advising friends in general, containing his reflections on vanity.

He had overheard a conversation, he said, as he passed along by the fortifications. It was between two foxes, a Jesuit fox advising a novice in foxhood.

"My son," the elder held forth, "you must above all cultivate the art of appearing enormously modest; the world loves nothing better than this sort of noble crawling. Vanity is the chief colour in the great painting of life, but most people know enough to hide it under a clever varnish which gives another general impression. No one breathes without his share of vanity; even he who most hangs his head and crieges and seems modesty personified is vain; while he is busy censoring others, vanity is surging through his own veins, and the little modest heart is saying, I thank thee, Lord, that I am not like these."

Now there was the question of publication, and of whether he could make some money by it, since the royal stipend had stopped. He went to a publisher who offered him a ridiculously small sum. Discouraged, he consulted Heiberg, and the poet-

critic, who liked the piece, which was quite in his own vein, advised him to be his own publisher. He also printed some samples in the *Flying Post* which helped to get subscribers. Nearly the whole edition of five hundred was subscribed, and soon a publisher mounted to the attic room of the young writer and offered more for the second edition than he had been willing to give for the first.

This was sweet as well as fairly profitable, but the kindness of the critics was sweeter still. They praised the good-natured wit, the quaint ideas, such as a view into the future three hundred years hence, where airships figured and Russia was now the best governed country in the world, and Spain had shaken off the Jesuits. Heiberg told the public how to read the book, not for sequence and logic, but to enjoy it as they would the skilfully combined reveries of an improvising musician.

Hans Christian swam in a sea of joy. All his friends were responding warmly. Edvard Collin, the grammatical and difficult, now volunteered to be his amanuensis; to help him with the correction of proofs; and Hans Christian began to feel he was scaling that chill but somehow desired peak of friendship. Colonel Guldberg wrote, brimming over with happiness for him and pride in him. Oddly enough this book, which so rejoiced the warm-hearted but rather sternly pious Colonel, also charmed Copenhagen, which then as now was far from being sternly pious. The circles in which Hans Christian moved began to spiral upwards, touched the landed aristocracy, who invited him to visit them in the country. He was noticed—oh, to be noticed!—where he had been overlooked before.

If there were any shadows, he could easily explain them away. Some of the more romantic writers who had hitherto beamed on the youth as being a candidate for their camp, now frowned and found fault, bemoaning his persiflage about solemn subjects. Oehlenschlaeger cooled. Ingemann warned against frivolity and begged him not to ask for or care about everybody's opinion but to be true to his own nature. The romantics were right in thinking that he belonged with them, but naturally the debutant would continue in the applause-bearing vein, and, inspired by an amused re-reading of his own early "tragedies", he wrote a vaudeville parodying all such sinister romanticism.

The kind of plays it satirised had already received such treatment, but it was accepted by the Royal Theatre, and performed in April 1829. With throbbing heart and dewy eyes, the author sat in a corner behind the scene, behind that very scene where, one dark New Year's morning, he had prayed that he might become an actor; in the building outside of which he had stood yearning and adoring as a penniless fourteen-year-old boy. Now it was ten years later, but he waited for the fate of his playlet with the same childlike intensity. The theatre was full, many of the young men who had matriculated with him were there, wildly loyal. When the last lines were spoken, they nearly tore the theatre down with riotous clapping, and cries of Long Live the Author. It was a pandemonium of approval in which a few hisses were neatly drowned. Hans Christian was so overcome both with hisses and applause that he rushed out into the street, over to Collin's, where only the deaf wife was at home. Seeing him sink into a chair convulsively crying, she mistook his emotion and began to murmur soothingly that even well-known authors had failed, had been hissed. "But", he shouted, "they haven't hissed, they have applauded and cried Long Live Andersen!"

CHAPTER X

ANDERSEN now did live. It was the most radiant spring of his life, though of course he thought it a mere prelude: a soft earnest of the glories and happiness that Providence had in store for him, now that the ten years of hardship had composed into a romantic background. Meanwhile he accepted what was so far offered and spread his sparkling energy in a little triumphal tour that included Slagelse and Odense. In Odense his mother clung to him and wept with joy; she had tormented her neighbours re-reading his letters to her, and here he was now, the same tender, grateful son. He saw her every day, walked everywhere with her, was far from embarrassed by the poor old woman with a big artificial curl over one eye to hide a cataract. He gave her what money he could, and tried to improve her lot in every way; averting his mind from the fact that she was tending to cheer herself with strong drink.

Nothing could check his exuberance. He stayed at manor houses, where the hosts liked the bit of lustre shed by the young poet, and where he plunged into being young for the first time. "We played shadows on the wall, and I was Columbine with long hair made of flax and bare arms, a great figure!" He told stories to the children, once getting fascinated by the tale himself, because the infant on his knee stared at him with such round, unblinking interest. Pausing at the point of highest tension, he gasped, "Now, what do you think of that!" to which the staring child replied, "You talk so much!"

He was successful enough to laugh at himself. For the young girls he wrote his easy comic poems and had endless jokes with them, but he was utterly heart-free. It seemed incorrect for a poet, but so it was. He could not manufacture any clouds in the sky. Back in Copenhagen, even the studies for the second examination glided more easily than ever before; and he passed with honours, heartily applauded by his patron saints, the Wulffs and the Collins. This gave him courage to approach old

Collin on the poignant question. Should he now begin to study for a profession, or dare he follow his heart, be content with the modest degree he had taken, and try to make his living as a writer?

Jonas Collin once more let those mild yet keen blue eyes rest searchingly on his odd protégé. He admitted to himself that he could hardly see young Andersen as doctor, pastor, or lawyer. But literature was also an honoured career; in fact, Denmark, discouraged from politics by an absolute monarchy, gave most of its intellectual energy to literature and the discussion thereof. It was not lucrative, but life was simple in Copenhagen. After all, the *Walking Trip* and the vaudeville had netted enough to keep him for a year. He had banked it for the boy himself.

"Go, in God's name," Collin finally said, "along the road you seem fitted to take: that will probably be best for you."

With this somewhat qualified blessing, Andersen was content. It was a need of his nature that, if possible, he should always be properly permitted or certified. The examination had given him the right to add Cand. Phil. to his name, and the man who represented paternal divinity had authorised him to be a writer.

He sat in the nice new room to which he had been able to move, proud of its neat sky-blue paper with a sprinkle of golden stars. The bed had once been slept in by a famous man. In what way, he mused, would he become famous? He considered the fields of literature, and thought of tilling patches in all of them. There was his darling, the theatre, and there was the historical novel he had begun, and there were quite enough poems to make a volume. Into a volume they went, published late in 1829, and reviewed benevolently by Molbech, the king of critics. Then the first light little cloud slipped over the rising moon: his reputation was now so visible that it could be attacked, and it was attacked, so that he had the fun of a few spirited little polemics. On the whole he defended himself well, and it was a kind of baptism into the brotherhood of literature. Nor did he feel so completely alone in the world. He could discuss things with Edvard Collin; they had come closer to each other. Edvard was so clever and so helpful in practical matters; he could read proof and knew how to handle printers; Edvard was almost the

ideal friend, the receiver of his every thought—that is, if it was sensible and well considered.

As for secrets, he had none, but should they develop and be unfit for Edvard, there was Mrs. Læssø. Andersen was now beginning to make friends with people who had met him after the awkward years, and prominent among those friends was Signe Læssø. She was a woman in the late forties, satisfactorily married and the mother of seven sons; but she had a large romantic heart that needed to adore, and she had a warm uncritical expressiveness, fairly uncommon in the North. It was just this freely flowing admiration of hers which drew Andersen to the Læssø home, where the mother set the tone, and no one ever teased him. He could expound the meaning of literature to his hostess, and be assured that he had opened the heavenly gates of poesy and joy to her. She told him of his easy merriment, his childlike goodness, his inexhaustible wit, his certainty of a fame that would live for centuries, and of her maternal love. It was a rich diet—only a young poet could have endured it; but he thrived on it and asked for more, except when less single-hearted friends were present, when he hurt and bewildered her by sudden persiflage. However, there she was, infinite heart and infinite listening power. She was an antidote to Edvard, but he needed them both.

Now, in the early summer of 1830, he decided to tackle the historical novel, and to take a reconnoitring trip to the scenes of action. Collin gave him letters to various officials. Partly for this reason, partly for his own budding glory, he was treated with such flattering consideration that it was a rather self-confident youth who at last arrived in Odense. He stayed some days with the widow and friendly daughters of the old printer. Although he in no way fell in love with the gay young things, yet summer was green and fragrant in the delicious island. He felt stirred and troubled. Visiting an old castle, he stopped entranced before the painting of a fair lady long dead. Oh that she were alive!

"Give me a bride", he wrote in his diary; "my blood needs love as my heart needs it!"

The last visit was to be made to a fellow-student, Christian Voigt, whose parents were prosperous citizens in a small town

near Odense. Andersen arrived rather early in the morning at the big timbered old house, so early that he found no one ready to receive him, except his friend's eldest sister, Riborg, a girl of about twenty. She had a sweet, serious face and large brown eyes. Riborg, he knew, was a great admirer of his writings. They were alone in the living-room, pleasant with etchings, books, piano, and flowers, and she poured his morning tea while he stole glances at her.



RIBORG, VOIGT, 1841

She wore a plain, becoming dress and a little frilly white cap on her dark hair. The brown eyes could sparkle gaily or look deeply wise, contrasting with the soft, childlike face, and although she blushed whenever she spoke to him their talk flowed freely on, happily started by her appreciation of his work. She laughed and joked about her lazy brother, and the young man thought her witty as well as exquisite; he exerted himself to please, and soon felt surprised at the ease and joy between them—they had only just met, and still it was as though they had known each other a long time. All the day he took pleasure in pleasing her, and the compliments from visiting provincial ladies thrilled him far less than usual. They sailed on the sea; they landed at a wood; she wove a wreath of oak-leaves and asked her brother to give it him. That night his spirit soared high; never had he been so brightly spontaneous; all the company, young and old, crowded fascinated about him, and Riborg sent him happy, sympathetic smiles. Never had he felt so rich in wit, nor such health in his soul.

It was late when he got back to the inn, but he was still so bubbling that he chatted with the maid and found occasion to

ask her to whom the Voigt girls might be engaged. Not one of them, she said, was engaged, except possibly in a way Riborg, and that was a pity, because the apothecary's son was not really good enough for her. If she cared for him at all, it was only because they had known each other since they were children, and because her father was against it, and would not let them meet. But the Lord only knew what would happen; she deserved a better man.

There was a stab and quiver in Andersen's heart. Poor girl, he thought, poor girl!

He had let the Voigts persuade him to stay on a bit, and the next day went in more picnics, singing, laughter, and coy feminine tributes to the young poet. In the evening there was a dance. Riborg liked to dance, but Andersen could not, and when she saw him sadly plastering the wall she came and sat down by him, refusing all invitations. If he had tried to please before, how much more intensely did he try now. Soon they had the intimate delight of discovering that they had read much in common and had the same tastes, but she deferred modestly to him, and again he was struck by her brains. She asked him for a copy of one of his poems.

Time whirled dizzily by, and now he was back in his room at the inn, trying to recall every word, every expression, to reflect on this she said and that she said, and what could she have meant, and what was the meaning of it all. Why did he feel a sudden, sneaking, oppressive fear? His soul was surely awry; he loved being here, and yet he was overwhelmed by a wild yearning to leave; there was no peace for him until he had made up his mind that he would and must leave the very next day.

The Voigts were surprised and sorry when he told them, but the morning had brought no diminution of his odd restlessness. Before leaving, however, he walked with her in the garden, and said that the heroine of his novel would be named after her. She laughed and blushed. He gave her a poem, and she gave him a nosegay, and she waved to him from the window, as the carriage rolled away with a sorrowful, yet somehow strangely relieved Andersen.

He returned to Odense, to the nestful of young girls at the house of the printer's widow, and so copiously did he poetise,

and so often did he mention the Voigts and Riborg, that the girls clapped their hands and cried, "In love at last!"

Aghast he heard it and marked it, and while outwardly he jested back, inwardly he felt as if swept by sweet fire. Was it true? Was that really what had happened to him? He recapitulated everything: his exaltation with her, the high tension of his whole being; what could it be but that? Yes, at last it had come.

This tremendous admission sent him into a state of sighs and of longing, which painted itself so noticeably on his face that the girls redoubled their teasing. It affected him. In a way he agreed with them. It was certainly ludicrous that he who had always mocked these yearnings should now himself be the victim. And to what could it lead? He had no income, nothing he could count on. He did not want to give up writing to study for a profession, even had he the means on which to study. Besides, what right had he to think of her at all? She was engaged, or nearly so.

By these sage reflections he cooled the uncomfortable fever, and his irrepressible verve conquered a budding melancholy. Life was still too filled with the problem of his own mere survival to admit of concentration on another person. Soon there was little left of his visit to the Voigts, except a pleasant warmth when he thought of the times he and Riborg had been together, and of the things she had said so charmingly of his work.

The flame that so suddenly and briefly had darted through all the complex layers of Andersen's personality now seemed well extinguished by the stream of daily life in Copenhagen, although he often visited Christian Voigt, and liked getting a greeting from his sister Riborg. But he was absorbed in writing an opera libretto for a young composer; he was preparing a new volume of poems; cultivating useful acquaintances among editors and reviewers; neglecting few performances at the Royal Theatre.

One day he heard from Christian Voigt that Riborg was coming to town with a girl who had to see a doctor, and that Riborg most of all looked forward to seeing Andersen again. He was to be sure to call on them.

She arrived, and he dropped everything to hurry to the house, where Riborg herself answered his ring.

There he stood, and stammered something incoherent as to whether a Miss X. lived there, the name of the sick girl. Riborg turned red, on his behalf, no doubt, but she asked him in, and gradually he recovered himself. He kept repeating his calls, until no sooner had he left the house than he began looking forward to re-entering it.

She asked him one day to read aloud from his libretto, which he did, but with a keen, startled feeling that each of the words came straight from his heart and bore her address plainly upon it. He feared to look at her, yet he did, and never had he seen her crimson so beautifully, nor keep her eyes so steadfastly on her sewing afterwards. When he left, she gave him her hand to thank him, and he pressed it to his lips, while his heart seemed like to burst.

Now he needed no teasing friends to open his eyes; now he knew that he loved her—bitterly, sweetly, tragically. He loved her, and it filled the whole of him, so that there was no more room for worries about income, or ridicule, or her engagement, or any worldly hindrance whatsoever. God must help him, and he would have strength and courage for anything, if only he might have her. He no longer doubted that she loved him, still, not doubting is one thing and certainty is another.

He gave her some poems. One of them, "To Her", was written on a separate piece of paper. It was a clear declaration, and he soon learned that she had shown the other poems to her friends, but not that one. She was embarrassed when he saw her next, but certainly not angry. He culled information from townspeople of hers as to the supposed fiancé, and they were unanimous in condemning him and in believing that she did not really care for him. Could things be more favourable? Andersen decided to approach her brother.

One evening he found Christian Voigt alone, and, by way of some German poems, he arrived at the topic of poets in love, and as naturally as anything his secret was out.

There was a slow deep pause, then her brother pressed Andersen's hand and admitted that he had suspected this, but that he knew nothing of his sister's feelings, except that she had a very special liking for him. Passionately Andersen tried to con-

vince him it was more, and he begged him to believe he would study for a profession, do anything the family might wish to prove his worth. Even the least little far-off hope would render him happy. He worked himself into such a state that he quivered in every limb, but just then the younger brother of Voigt arrived with some hilarious friends. Quickly Andersen had to clap on good-fellowship and act the entertainer; until, after several hours of torment, he could escape to the chill fresh darkness of outdoors. There a terrific fit of trembling shook him, tears sprang to his eyes, and dizzily he staggered to a wall, fearing a faint. He was barely able to reach home, and he fainted on the bed.

No chance of seeing her offered itself for the next few days, and reluctantly he decided to write. The brother would bring him her answer.

Two almost equally strong emotions ran oddly through this letter—his deep shy love and his painful haunting fear that possible indiscretion on her part might lead to his being ridiculed. Sensitively and delicately he asked her to make sacredly certain that she loved the other man, and, if so, he wished them happiness for ever, but if not—oh, he would do anything for her, and through her he could become anything. And he trusted her womanly heart not to let the world jeer at his feelings; he reiterated that the letter must be destroyed or returned.

Through the brother he heard how she had burst into weeping when she had read the letter, had sobbed that she could not, dared not, make the other man unhappy—he trusted her, and what would Andersen himself think of her if she could do it; might he not fear a like fate?

Twice again he saw her, but each time with her family, so that there was no chance of speaking; still he saw that she was pale and that the soft brown eyes sought his. The last evening of her stay came; he waited for her at the theatre door, found her hand, felt the answering clasp. Her eyes were wet as she whispered: "Good-bye, good-bye for ever!"

When Riborg arrived home in the little town, she found that her parents had prepared a surprise for her. They had relented. They had arranged to have her welcomed by her suitor, now her accepted fiancé. This completed her misery; the subtleties

of divided affection were too much for her simple romantic soul, and she felt sinful, almost ill.

Andersen now had a real secret to share with his friends; at least he gave them vivid hints that an unhappy passion was consuming him, a passion that bordered on the sinister since she was the bride of another. To every one of his confidantes did he display his wound and get the balm of sympathy, but especially, of course, to Mrs. Læssø, who agonised and palpitated over him as no one else. Still, comforting as women were, he yearned for a friend of his own sex. He had indeed a number of university comrades with whom he took part in masquerades and with whom he discussed Heine, Walter Scott, and Hoffmann, but what he was seeking was The Friend—that complement of one's self which questing youth, unable alone to bear the strain of emotion, is always freshly reincarnating in successive candidates, forced thus to change his habitation because sooner or later the rascal insists on being himself, and on transferring the strain of his own joys and griefs.

For a while Andersen's ideal friend resided in Lorentzen, a youth from the German part of Denmark and more fluidly responsive than the laughter-fearing Danes. Letters passed between them of such lofty sentiment that the impish in Andersen presently came up, and he turned matter-of-fact. Besides, Lorentzen turned critical, and maintained that if the historical novel were written, all the characters would be little Andersens in various disguises. And Lorentzen wanted attention paid to his poems, his problems, his sufferings in love's realm—thus he could no longer be The Friend, and the correspondence languished.

Ingemann, though himself a writer of the too ripely romantic type, saw most clearly what was happening. He warned him against hurrying to translate his feelings into literature before they had had time to mature consciously and clearly—"breathing on the buds of the soul to make them open before their time".

This was in reference to Andersen's new volume of verse, *Sketches and Fancies*, in which signs pointed so plainly to Riborg that Mrs. Læssø asked him did he want daily to remind the girl

of having lost such a genius. Suffer in silence, she besought him; unaware that she might as well ask him not to breathe.

No doubt all his good bourgeois friends were frankly, as usual, letting him know that they thought he was making poetic capital out of his grief, and that therefore it could not be genuine. They forgot that he was an artist, that is, with an overpowering need for expression, and that, furthermore, he was a writer, whose means of expression must be words. His feelings were no less genuine, but even while the blunt pain was crushing him, he could watch himself writhe and communicate the sensation. He could also be aware of this. "I know it has given greater depth to my verse", he wrote to a friend.

He suffered genuinely enough; he had the chief symptom of the disease—not wanting to be cured. Bad as it was, he wondered how he ever managed to live before his heart was filled by her image. Even had he been able, he would not have returned to that empty childish existence.

Could the artist in him have grown as well if he had succeeded in detaching Riborg Voigt from the apothecary's son? Probably not; happiness is a notorious deaf-mute. He might have gone entire^{ly} silent in the absorbing servitude of family and profession. Did he perhaps suspect this? Not consciously. Had she given him a frank yes, he would have leaped to the seventh heaven of joy, even if it were also the eighth purgatory of embarrassment, but the girl wavered and wept and blushed. A storm attack was called for. The tempestuous lover was of course not in Andersen's character, but the least little more vehemence might have carried the day. The truth is that his unconscious did not come to his aid, and in these matters it is the underground forces that carry the day; their shock and press must be massed behind the desire. But since Andersen's earliest years, these "willers and helpers" had been ranked behind ambition—ambition to rise from inferiority through self-expression, and even the strength of the mating and nesting instinct could not shift them. The species lost to the individual.

Meanwhile the individual was not having a triumphant time. He had not only been defeated in his first love, but the sparkling welcome accorded to his first works had gone under the usual

cloud. Critics are really more ashamed of enthusiasm than of injustice, and often redress the balance rather savagely; but, besides obeying this natural law, some of them went for young Andersen because he had taken sides in a literary controversy which was then raging in Denmark with a fervour and bitterness almost incomprehensible to-day.

It was, roughly, the old quarrel between classicism and romanticism; between emphasis on form and emphasis on feeling. Wit, elegance, and learning were supposed to be on one side, and heart, beauty, and natural genius on the other. The great poet Oehlenschlaeger, as hero of the romanticists, had long ago been attacked by the witty Jens Baggesen, since dead; but the attack was now renewed on the whole movement by a clever anonymous writer in *Letters of a Ghost*, purporting to be from the dead Jens Baggesen. Copenhagen was in an uproar, and everyone took sides. Andersen had little choice; the Ghost called him uncouth, soft-headed, conceited, bathetic, and other hard words. He tried to defend himself, but Heiberg, the editor and his former friend, and many others were on the side of the Ghost, whose flowing verse and stinging wit were much applauded.

It was under these unfavourable conditions that his second volume of verse appeared: the *Sketches and Fancies* in which his feelings for Riborg were poignantly expressed, and in which there were fine lyrics and some captivating short stories in verse. But if in the beginning Andersen had been lifted higher than he was really entitled to, he was now ducked lower than just in the icy green pool of fault-finding. His carelessness about grammar and spelling, his indiscriminate use of any word he liked, gave the relentless proof-readers a chance. Once he was present in a house where an amateur critic picked flaws with pompous zeal in several of his poems, until, tired but satisfied, he put down the book and there was a pause. A round-eyed girl of six picked up the book, pointed to a line, saying, "There is one little word you haven't scolded yet!" The word was "and". Turning red, the critic kissed her, but Andersen did not always find such defenders. His older friends had got it firmly in their heads that "praise relaxes", and were entrenched in the policy of telling him the truth for his own good. The disagreeable truth, of

course; though in this connection the adjective may almost be taken for granted.

Needless to say, this was not the time when the young man enjoyed this characteristic form of benevolence, but he was held in a net of dependence and gratitude; he had to bow his head and pretend to be edified. Yet, sometimes, out of the meekness would flare violent and tearful self-assertion: he *would* become a great writer; his name *would* become world-famous. And then the tale of his silly vanity would fly from house to house, though at that moment he might be sitting in his room, despairing as darkly of himself as ever in his school-days.

Old Collin saw that the combined misery of unhappy authorship and unhappy love was genuinely too much. Furthermore, Riborg's wedding had now actually taken place. Prompted perhaps by Edvard, who in his dry way watched over his friend, he suggested the time-honoured remedy—travel.

Andersen had never been abroad. The thought exalted him. Fortified by Collin's approval, he decided to use some of his little savings for a trip to Germany.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN he boarded the steamer for Lubeck he felt the clean fresh thrill of putting salt-water in ever-widening stretches between himself and all the trite, the disagreeable, and the sorrowful. He tingled with expectations of the new and the strange. The nearest thing to being born again and seeming to profit by your experience without being handicapped by your past is landing in a foreign country on a pleasure trip, bound to do nothing but live, observe, and enjoy. No one was better fitted for this than Hans Christian Andersen. Through the vaulted old gate in the thick city wall of Lubeck he stepped into a world where no one knew about his past or his foibles; where he was dependent on no one but himself. All that his quivering sensitiveness had to do was spread itself wide and net as many impressions as possible. He was all receptivity, and his poverty as well as the conditions of travel in 1831 greatly favoured it. From Lubeck down to the Harz Mountains he went by slow public coaches; then his long legs took him through the mountains; then by coach to Halle, Leipzig, Dresden; on foot again a little space into Bohemia, and by coaches back to Lubeck and the steamer for home.

He had only about six weeks, but every day of them nourished some side of his nature. The dark medieval towns, sombre mountains, Gothic cathedrals, and Roman Catholicism, all struck the Dane as romantically sinister, especially when he heard the choir of eunuchs still kept up in the Dresden cathedral. He did his duty by the sights in every town and eagerly wrote his name on rocks, trees, and walls, like any fame-starved tourist. Armed with letters of introduction, and sometimes just with the words, "I am a poet", he called on German writers, among them Tieck and Adalbert von Chamisso. They treated him with simple kindness, half due to his own eager charm, half to a more leisurely and less self-conscious age, when writers called on writers as a matter of course.

But apart from the romantic sight-seer, and the professional

poet, and the sentimentalist who sighed in the right spots for his lost love, there was the artist who stretched all his senses to the utmost: seeing and hearing pictures and stories in everything, far more interested really in his simple fellow-travellers than in Raphael's Madonnas. In the coach from Hamburg a student had baptized each one with the name of some celebrity from his town or country, all except one old maid whose town had none. Andersen felt the more interested in her. She was dark and smallpox-scarred, but he liked the kind sad look in her brown eyes and her benevolent smile when the young people laughed. She remarked that she had been in Hamburg for the first time, but otherwise she was silent. Only when they rolled into the narrow streets of Lüneburg, where the ancient houses with pointed gables stood cloister-like in the moonlight, did she speak, "Now I am home".

The other travellers courteously descended from the coach to see her to her house; the old chemist offered her his arm. It was about eleven o'clock—the town lay utterly still. The moon poured brightness on dormer-windows and pointed gables. The town watchman came swinging a large rattle; he sang some verses, stopping in the middle of one to say, "Welcome home, Miss". She nodded to him, calling him by name as she went up the high stone steps, then she curtsied to her travelling companions and disappeared. Not quite, however, for when the postilion had blown his horn, and the company was once more in the coach, Andersen saw a light in her room, and a shadow on the blind; it was she who gazed after them.

Another time there was a mild little schoolmaster with a velvet skull-cap, whom he met again on top of the Brocken, and who felt badly because all his friends and neighbours, yes and the old cook too, could not also be there, "when there would be plenty of room for everybody"; the Englishman who praised Denmark, adding that were it only English it would be the jewel of Europe, and many others. All stimulated his imagination, and he put them into the story of his travels which he wrote and published as soon as he returned to Copenhagen.

Travel Silhouettes he called it, and it was a personal little book, with fancy that was still sometimes rather literary and

laboured, but which often had the clean deep lines of the freshly etched impression. There were landscapes in it really seen through his own eyes; genre pictures, poems, and even an experimental fairy-tale told with the lightest of grace and humour. But it was not a work of genius, and even had it been the critics might have been equally sour. They were now in that corner. He was blamed for frivolity, for lack of ideas, for lack of grammar and orthography, for lack of construction and of serious purpose. It was as though a man had thrown a bamboo bridge across the brook in his garden, and the neighbours kept coming round to shake their heads and to mutter that it would never, never carry a railway train.

Part of the trouble was of course that Andersen was inclined to behave as though it would; and in the small realm of literary Copenhagen this behaviour could not pass unnoticed. He kept bobbing into the staid and reasonable with his freshness, his naïve propaganda, his voluble confidence, and what, pray, was there to show for it? Trifles, light as air, and a few poems. Still promising, said the kindlier; once promising, said the others, their tone on the whole impersonal and benevolently weary. One man only, Molbech, a dusty all-round pedant, took a personal dislike to the incorrigible youth. Molbech was a soul entirely book-nourished, a born editor and compiler of other people's works, a sort of library-bat in whom flashes of life and mistakes in grammar stirred a fluttering rage. Fate would have it that he was made one of the readers of plays for the Royal Theatre, and all his opinions of the manuscripts submitted by Andersen exhaled a grey poison-gas that could hardly have been caused by the innocent dramatic efforts alone, incompetent though they undoubtedly were. That pedant hated poet was the only conclusion possible. The opposite was not true; Andersen wanted above all to please, even Molbech. Since he had been criticised for lack of form, he soon published something which was meant to be essence of form, a collection of verses each of them meant to sum up the *good* qualities of some Danish poet in an epigrammatic quatrain.

They too fell almost soundlessly to earth. So, within the next couple of years, did more poems and the various dramatisations of foreign books that he kept hurling at the Royal Theatre.

This sad fate of theirs was not, except in Molbech's case, due to personal enmity, as the sombrely despairing author proclaimed, but to the sad fact that they were not really very good, not comparable to the travel book. This was due somewhat to his inexperience—he was a very young twenty-six—but mostly to the relentless pressure of having to produce in order to live.

He needed very little money, but since 1829 he had had to be self-supporting, and while food could be cut down to bread and cheese and the dinner hospitality of friends, a room had to be paid for, and clothes must be clean and decent—this both his own neatness and the circles he frequented seemed to him to demand. There was also his mother.

Ane Marie had gone rapidly down hill, and she had landed in the hopeless bog of tippling. Her letters were wails of complaining beggary. His friends in Odense administered the money which he took from his own bare necessity to send her, but she was angry with the drunkard's rage against being controlled. To no one in Copenhagen except the warm-hearted Mrs. Læssø did Andersen disclose this painful grief, but it nagged him bitterly. He visited Odense, he stayed at manor-houses, everyone was his hearty friend. Colonel Guldberg's strong voice never tired of praising the travel book and the poems; he pooh-poohed the critics—"Did you ever know envy to be dumb?"—but for all that it was as though light and warmth had left his native town, as though he were wandering in a ghost-land.

The mother whom he had loved and whose love for him had irradiated his childhood was dead without being dead, alive without being alive, and there was nothing he could do about it.

And, in spite of Guldberg's booming affectionate encouragement, and Ingemann's kind reassurances from Sorø; in spite of the sustaining feminine battalion of Henriette Wulff and Henriette Hanck and Mrs. Læssø, he knew that he had not as yet really proved himself the genius that he must believe himself to be or perish: go the way of his insane grandfather or drunken mother.

Trembling from the alternative, he refused to look back at the little he had accomplished and let his mind storm forward to the triumphal vindication that would surely come. Yet he was

unhappy. Not only because of his mother, nor because of the Riborg wound still unhealed, but because of this terrific gap between the position he had and the position he felt he was, so to speak, potentially entitled to. As if the butterfly in the ridiculous chrysalis stage knew it was going to be a butterfly, but no one else did, and was scandalised or amused if the chrysalis mentioned it. A very trying stage, and quite as much so for Andersen's friends as it was for himself.

No one felt this state of affairs more than Edvard Collin, into whose care the awkward boy had once been committed by old Collin, and who had taken it as seriously as he did everything in his honest, methodical life. His blue eyes had not his father's searching dominant light in them, but they were steady, clear, and good, and it both saddened and angered them to see poor Andersen make a fool of himself so often by his utter weak-willed lack of self-control when he was given a chance to declaim his poems. He was unable to refuse, yet Edvard knew only too well that some people asked him to perform merely in order to snigger behind his back. One evening in a house where this sort of amusement was expected, Edvard rushed to Andersen and announced that if he recited a single piece, he, Edvard, would go home.

Naturally there was a scene in private afterwards, and Edvard abominated scenes. They meant that to justify himself to his old friend, he had to show some of the real affection which, almost in spite of himself, he felt for him; and it was Edvard's firm conviction that if you gave Andersen an inch of affection he would want a square mile then and there, to be delivered with sighs, tears, embraces, and confidences. Was it not soon after saving him from that evening's mockery that Andersen had hinted they might drop the formal "you" and call each other "thou"? Edvard shuddered.

No one brought up in the English language where "you" is a sea in which everybody swims forever, and not a Rubicon to be crossed before real intimacy can be achieved, is able to imagine the nice torments and nicer delights of having two possible modes of addressing other human beings. Calling your friend by his or her first name is not quite the same thing. To "thou"

someone with whom you have not played in the democracy of childhood is a far subtler, keener sensation than the arrival at first names. Between man and woman it offers a thrill that can tingle with all-divesting meaning, its giving and withdrawing can be made sunlight and ice alternate; but even as between men, especially in those shyer and more formal times, the dropping of the "you" was the dropping of a real barrier, and it could be an invitation into the heart's secret garden—if you had such a thing!

Edvard knew that he had not; he was a law student and a destined pillar of society, but he knew that Andersen had, and one full of flowers too strongly scented for him. He suspected he would be asked not only to walk but to live in it. Against this he quite rightly defended himself. Edvard was shy—with the shyness of those who instinctively know that they would be emotionally insufficient for any except their own good dry pun-making kind. Had he not barely escaped hearing all about the Riborg Voigt affair? Andersen had finally written to him about it from Germany, but one could ignore a letter, and as long as the formal mode of address stood like a trimmed hedge between them, he could keep these embarrassing confidences at arm's length. Let him weep to his tender women friends—Mrs. Læssø, and the little Wulff girl and the Odense girls and to Edvard's own sisters, though they were a match for him. It was difficult enough for himself, when even his severe lectures on the evil of vanity were taken as a chance for Andersen to twine about him, ivy-fashion. "I must respect whomever I am going to love and cling to," he had written, "I would rather he should be much above than below me"—and he had also said that though they might not say "thou" with words their hearts would say it and they were friends forever.

Edvard agreed. They were friends. It warmed his heart to hear the long flying steps coming to his top-floor room; and he could not resist Andersen, no one could, when he was at the happy end of his scale, breathlessly full of something that interested him, his eyes so alive, his sensitive lips curving into smiles: almost handsome he was then, something Edvard would take good care not to tell him. Nor would he tell him, what Andersen fished for so often and so obviously, that he was going

him to hint that he might some day be counted with Oehenschlaeger or Ingemann, or even with the neat new modern writers, Heiberg, Hertz, Paludan-Müller: *they* had a sense of form, they were sophisticated, they had culture.

No, if Edvard agreed that they were friends it was because he liked the tall, thin, warm-hearted person for himself, but that did not mean they could be comrades. Andersen took the rules for modest behaviour too unseriously, and his own hectic emotions too seriously, for the two to be uncomplicatedly young together. And Edvard's whole nature and upbringing made him a monitor friend. He saw things so clearly in black or white. "*Either you are really conceited, and then you cannot change; or you are not conceited, and then it is only a wrong manner.*" The latter could be corrected, and Edvard meant to try. "*When I told a certain person that you were visiting in Odense, he said, 'He's probably reading all of his poems aloud', and you know there is only one way of stopping such remarks, removing the occasion for them. If you have but one true friend besides myself who is not ashamed to speak his mind, ask him; you'll get the same answer.*"

Edvard's letters were marvels of common sense and good monitorship, but Andersen was not unduly impressed. "Don't moralise so much—your letters often have something, something *solid* about them—things about the Future, etc.—it depresses me; by God I can't stand it, can't stand it now—be my own dear Edvard, as you have sometimes been." "If you could only be confidential with me!"

"Don't look so *sensible*!" he often cried to him, but still Edvard, who was not so snuffy as his youthfully priggish letters, drew him irresistibly. It was the cool, steady, helpful, dependable, shyly kind, dryly affectionate person himself, but it was also Edvard as vicar for old Collin: still the Jehovah of Andersen's universe. In one of his humble replies to the charge of vanity, he offered the suggestion that perhaps part of the reason he found it so hard to say no when asked to perform was his good-nature, and also the desire to please. Did not all young people desire to please, and as his beauty could not help him——! But it did not matter what a certain person or any others thought of him, it only Edvard and his Father understood his better self. "Tell me

when you write what *he* really thinks of me. Are his ideas and yours the same? He is the one fixed point to which I cling in this crowded world."

Old Collin was the Saviour and the Father, and his house was the only home that Andersen had. He came there every day still. The Collins had seen him evolve from the pale, gawky, raw-wristed boy, whose very table manners had to be corrected, into something more presentable; but he was aware that the first absurd impressions were not forgotten, and he craved their expressed approval of his present self more than he craved anything, even fame, or, rather, he craved fame so as to get their approval. And if his writings could not compel the desired admiration, what had he? Nothing—in fact he was practically a fraud.

Circumstances soon made it more than a question of honour to secure their approval, and made it more than ever vital for him to melt his way into Edvard's confidence. But Edvard kept him off more than ever. Andersen's tone grew anguished—he wrote that he saw their ways diverging, saw Edvard's going up and his going down. His poetic career was but a falling star. And then the usual culmination—death. Death would be better. "I will and must hide my sorrow from you; I shall not bore you—no one loves you better, but I shall never forget the differences between us——"

The Collins were not snobs. Had they been they would not have tolerated a being so at variance with them for so long and so intimately. Why the vast hidden sorrow and the emphasis on differences? Edvard was a most desirable friend, but the best of friends do not elicit such wounded cries.

The truth was that Andersen had not come back from Germany cured of the Riborg affair. He came back needing more than ever to get comfort by confiding his pain to a sympathetic soul. Who was there? Who were his bosom friends? He knew other young men besides Edvard, but he felt superior to them. He rather feared the excessive sympathy of Mrs. Læssø. With the two Henriettes, Wulff and Hanck, he had laughed and jeered too much about others in a similar plight, and besides he did not feel in the least drawn to them in anything but friend-

ship. But a friend was what he wanted. No, not really. He wanted a remedy. And though the clinging, dependent part of him had always yearned for Edvard as a friend because of his own sake, yet his sudden intense preciousness was due not only to his being himself, and old Collin's son, but to his being young Louise Collin's brother.

Louise was the youngest of the children. She had been a little child when Andersen first came to the house; he had danced round with her, amused her by a thousand vivid stories, drawn pictures and cut out dolls for her. She was now eighteen, not exactly beautiful, but charming, mild, and sweetly understanding. She alone never teased their poor left-hand "brother", and when the rough jokes of the boys or a reproof from the Father made him rush from the room to hide the tears, it was she who followed and consoled and led back. Ingeborg, the older sister, did too, but her methods were slap-dash humour, and, besides, she was



LOUISE COLLIN

married to the quiet, handsome Adolph Drewsen. It was the gentleness of Louise that drew Andersen's pain over Riborg out of him. She was instinctively selected as the one who could act both as unguent and counter-irritant.

But at first he felt only the relief of gliding into smooth welcoming waters after rough seas; the relief and the mild feminine peace about her—a peace undisturbed by love's nervous uncertainties. Sadness still overwhelmed him, but it was endurable sadness, now that she bent her gentle head to listen and her white sloping shoulders rose with sympathetic sighs. And as

naturally as anything succeeded a feeling which was even more healing than the sense of peace—the sudden glad dawn-like gleam that all the charms of women had not disappeared from his world with the vanishing of Riborg Voigt.

Brown eyes were entrancing, but there was something about blue eyes—something——. There was a brief space of impersonally recognising this interesting fact; then to his own amazement a queer sensation invaded his heart—had he felt it before? No, not like this! A little poem must express it, and a little poem did find its way to Louise—oh, as a mere literary jest—in which brown eyes were of the earth and beckoned down and made one dizzy, while blue eyes beckoned up and opened a heaven of love, and a dead heart began to beat again.

Only a poem, she could not, and she did not, take it personally. Neither was she offended; she continued to be kind, to listen, to smile, to sigh. Then the Collins went to their country-place. He could no longer see her every day. Still there was a compensation. The house lay only a few miles from Copenhagen, but it was far enough to excuse letters. She said that she would like letters from him—what more could a writer want!

He wrote, he did nothing but write. He touched all the strings he possibly dared: her kindness, his loneliness, how he loved Edvard, loved them all; his soul was full of love. He must indeed be a genuine poet, he said, even if he had not as yet expressed it in his works, for his mind, his every thought, was poetry; even the whole prosy world around him seemed poetic, and he was seized by a strange love for it. The word love flickered firefly-like through the decorous lines—he hoped she would not think his letter odd. Would she be at the races to-morrow, he had missed her to-day, and here was another poem, and think sometimes of him, and he was Her Poet.

Never had his pen slid so easily over paper. But letters were unsatisfactory; decorum prescribed limits to their length as it did to their intensity, and it was so hard to explain his complicated self in a small space. He yearned to explain himself, to make her understand why he was the curious creature he knew he must seem, and for this it was necessary to begin at the very beginning. So he wrote the story of his life ostensibly for Louise alone; he made a whole stitched little book of it, his writing as

neat as possible. It was touchingly vibrant with desire to be frank and desire to appear at his best, his best according to Collin standards. "I knew no better then," was the tone in it, "this was vanity, but I am cured now; that might seem high-strung, but perhaps that only means not so slack as the average, and anyhow one outgrows it"—and he poked fun at himself to prove that he was now cured and a dependable member of society. His pathetic childhood, his early Copenhagen sufferings, his school torments, they were all displayed, and he finished with the Riborg episode, which he did not minimise—was it not through being crushed by this tragedy that he had got Louise's dear sympathy! Now she had his whole life in a private edition to be sympathetic about, and he waited tensely for her response.

There was none. The family moved back to Copenhagen; he often saw her, but only in the family. Yet she had said that his letters pleased her; had said it even after he had written one that very nearly revealed his heart's shy secret. But he could not get near her. She walked in remoteness. It must be the book. There was no other way but to write again. He dipped his pen in tears and wrote. Why, when so trustfully he had laid bare his life to her did she never mention it with a single word? Was there anything in his nature so repugnant that it made him unworthy of her friendship? It was an eternity since he had talked with her. Always so many other people. He was so unhappy. If he could only travel. If he did, might he write to her? Oh, why was she so cold, why did she seem to misunderstand his brotherly devotion! She could influence him tremendously—and even if the poet did not interest her, let her not forsake the human being; she alone could guide and determine him. Ah, he was soul-sick, his joy in life was dead, his hopes mere dreams. Written at midnight in despair—her brotherly A.

Louise, who saw that she had stirred up far more than she could or cared to manage, went to her married sister Ingeborg and confessed that in consoling poor Andersen she had perhaps been a trifle incautious, and now what was to be done? Should she let him continue writing to her?

Ingeborg, unsentimental but kind, said yes, but Louise was to tell him that her sister must read everything; that would be more proper.

Louise conveyed this to her poet, who was not surprised— young ladies in 1832 were thought to be only half hardy; perhaps he was even a little flattered to be thought dangerous, but the plan did seriously embarrass him. It sent him back into sad generalities about his loneliness, his love for the whole family, his need for sisterly affection—the eternities between his seeing her, and the weird feeling when he realised it was only the day before. But do not misunderstand, do not let Ingeborg misunderstand!

And so on. Much emphasis on not misunderstanding— depressing little paraphrase for “do understand!”

Louise did understand, and continued to put up chill barriers of impersonality, all the more since she was quietly falling in love herself at this time—with a Mr. Lind, a nice, jolly, everyday man, a solicitor. She was so quiet about it, and the rest of the family so considerably discreet that Andersen never suspected a thing until the engagement was announced about New Year, 1833.

Other people knew and watched. Mrs. Læssø, who had been retired into the background, wrote him now from the height of her rhetoric: “. . . and so it has happened, the thing none of us expected; she was not the honest girl I thought her! In spite of her soulful eyes and lovely smile, she was not of the elect. Let an experienced woman who knows her sex tell you this—her vanity craved tribute, and who could so satisfy it as a poet! . . . But you will not sacrifice all your joy in life to her . . . ?”

CHAPTER XII

ANDERSEN took neither the low road of dismissing Louise as a coquette, nor the high road of sacrificing all his joy in life. There were poisonous moments of feeling that he had not been good enough—that beauty or riches or worldly honour would have got him victory. But this did not last long. His generosity conquered these natural reflexes. Perhaps too he half realised that if he had not exactly meant to use her as one nail to drive out another, yet he had sought her at first more for relief of pain than for her own sake. But it hurt. It was failure once more. Even though he would ultimately come to see that Louise was a pleasant, ordinary young girl who wanted, and was entitled to want, a similar husband, it was bound for some time to stir all the stepson feelings in him, wearing wooden shoes and hand-me-down clothes, a seething heart and a grateful face.

He did love his friends. He was grateful to them—O God, yes!—but how he longed to get away from them, from everything, from Copenhagen, from Denmark. Now more than ever he craved Edvard's confidence, and now of course Edvard was buttoned up to the nose. Old Collin was as reserved as ever, but he was kind; he agreed that the King might be applied to for a year's stipend, but he thought it would be hard to get—so many excellent young people were being subsidised by the state to travel: among them Hertz, whose *Letters of a Ghost* had recently flayed Andersen. But let him try. The King had promised to accept a copy of his new poems; when he gave it to him, let him state his case, and meanwhile his friends among well-known authors ought to give him testimonials.

He collected testimonials. He got the royal audience. Frederik the Sixth rushed at him and said in his gruff manner, "What's the book?"—"Your Majesty, a cycle of poems."—"Cycle, cycle, what do you mean?"—"Some poems about Denmark", Andersen quavered, and then, just as the King began to bow dismissal,

he burst out about his travel-stipend. The King cut him short: "Bring me a petition".

The ready tears welled out. "I have it here, and that is what I think so terrible, to bring your Majesty the book and the petition at the same time—but they said it must be done that way—and I hate it!"

Frederik laughed loudly, took the paper, and Andersen fled. But nothing happened.

Edvard, who was now the secretary of the travel fund, went about with his closed face; old Collin kept hinting that it was difficult. In the home Andersen heard Louise laugh at the puns of the estimable solicitor; in the literary periodicals Molbech hissed at his new poems; and in his own soul the laming conviction grew that he was on the wrong track, that his development as a creator had stopped. Only the year abroad—France, Italy—could work the miracle of making him sane and happy. Not daring to speak to Edvard, he wrote him, "It is not a year of my life that I wish to escape from; it is my whole spiritual self I wish to save". He begged for the truth, said he knew there was no hope, only put him out of suspense.

Edvard was surprised at the letter. Surely he had not been so busy that he had forgotten to tell his friend the matter was practically settled. Edvard and his father had only been outwardly reserved. They knew well what Andersen was suffering: his all too visible intensity about Louise had kept them from even a whisper about her engagement. They really grieved for him, but it took a practical form. They got him his stipend.

Yes. It was settled. He was to have it for two years, not one. It was not a great deal, but enough to live on. France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany. At once.

All the Collins were at the boat to say farewell to Andersen when he left on April 22, 1833, for the two years' absence, and as his quick eye read their faces he saw real sorrow there. Louise shed tears. All his bitterness melted: they were his home, his family, and he was leaving them, but it was a good, a comforting sadness.

During the voyage to Germany, the Captain brought him a letter. "It came through the air", he jested.

The letter was from Edvard.

"I thought it would please you to hear from me before you could expect to. What have I to say? Nothing! I cannot collect my thoughts at this moment. Believe me, I feel deeply your going away; I will miss you terribly much, miss our frequent talks in my room, miss you at the table on Tuesdays, yet I know that it will be harder for you, for you are alone. But if it is any comfort to know that one has friends at home who think of one, then that comfort is certainly yours, for you will always be in our loving remembrance. Farewell, my dear, dear friend. God let us meet happily in two years!"

A dark corner of the ship had to hide the quick rush of emotion in the traveller who read this—it was better to him even than the stipend. Never, never would he doubt Edvard again! He kissed the letter. From Hamburg he wrote his fervent thanks, begged forgiveness for having been unjust, and hinted at his recent suffering. But perhaps it had been necessary to make him a poet.

"Pickled in the cold, boiled with the heat" of three weeks in romantic stage-coaches, Andersen at last arrived in Paris. More correctly he arrived in the little colony of Danish young men there, most of whom he knew. They got him a room: he went to restaurants with them, to theatres and concerts and sights with them. They talked Danish and revelled in remembering the dear little country. They shared each other's letters. For that matter, Andersen was not really living in Paris, he was living in the expectation of letters and in the writing of them. If he wore out precious boots walking the streets, and noting everything, it was as eyes promenading for the friends at home.

"You are now with me in my big room with the tiled floor, the white hangings round the bed, two chests of drawers, sofa, easy chair, et cetera. We go downstairs, but hold on to the railing; the steps are tiled, easy to slip on. Now we are down, the old concierge says *bonjour*, and we go out into the rue Vivier i.e. Shop next to shop, finery and paintings, meat and sausages in garlands, every house in Paris is in trade. Now we enter a

passage; that is, a street with tiled floor and glass roof: here are delightful shops, everything the heart desires, even down to unplatonic love. . . . We come to the Palais Royal, a handsome palace, with shops sparkling behind its colonnades, a garden and fountains in the middle, and crowds of people."

Here he had his coffee, then more wanderings, the *Jardin des Plantes*, Notre Dame, and final despair at describing everything. He had a slightly terrified look at Heine and an anonymous peep at Victor Hugo. He saw King Louis-Philippe, over-anxious to please, saw the pale timid Queen; even got into a public function where he had to wear silk stockings, white gloves, and a curl in his lank hair. He stood in the Place Vendôme when the Napoleon column was raised. "Huh!" grinned an old woman, "to-day they put him up, to-morrow they tear him down. I know the French!"

He enjoyed the vivacity and easy intellect of the people, though he felt obliged to mention that innocence was probably only a visitor here, and not in actual residence. He got used to the *sans-gêne*, he said, even to the unblushing pictures and the undressed ballets. In fact, in this atmosphere of coruscating lightness, even he blossomed out and had a pair of grey linen trousers tailored, which made him suddenly see what fine thighs he had, what excellent calves. He carried himself better too, he informed them at home; there was much more decision in his bearing and fewer long-armed gestures. He might perhaps have investigated Parisian frivolity more intimately, but he was still too close to the pure-eyed Louise, too conscious of yearning for Collin approval, and too hopelessly serious about his emotions. And he was in the grip of two stronger passions. One was an almost mad longing for letters. He always kept account of those he wrote and those he received. He had written twenty-one and received none! Yes. One. He had been in Paris a fortnight when he got a nice fat letter, unstamped. But he gladly paid the postage.

It was a copy of a Copenhagen paper, containing a satiric poem against him. Nothing else. It was a thing of jealous spite, an effusion from the dark side of being a small country, but it was so low that after the first swooning pain he was able to

swerve into despising it, and to long all the more for letters from the friends who were the real Denmark. Chiefly he wanted to hear from Edvard, wanted to make sure that their new understanding was durable. Reassurance came at last, though Edvard's tone was a little in the spirit of—Once and for all I've told you that I love you. He did say a few tender words, and then—Shake hands, I really value you, we are old friends, now let us talk of something else. Why do you waste your time with the Danes. Learn French! And don't write so many letters.

The monitor was back, but the friend was still a tower of strength. Edvard quoted a coldly contemptuous note that his father, on his own initiative, had published against the satiric verses, and, Edvard added, "it is well he did it, for I should not have been so calm. I should have been tempted to beat the fellow!"

There was a hot volcanic spark under Edvard's ice, and Andersen warmed his heart by it. But it was true about seeing so many Danes. He was not learning enough French. Worse still, he had not enough time to write his new poetic drama, *Agnete*.

Agnete was, besides letters, his other great passion. He had planned it some time before he left home, but now he felt that it must be written. It would show them how travel had developed him. It would give the lie to the envious who said he would be the same old slipshod Andersen anywhere. Then they would see that he did have invention, plot, material, form, logic! And poetic dramas were the certain way to fame. He too could do one; he was doing it. At night in his Paris room he read bits of it to himself with the fatuous, incommensurable delight of the author with a new-laid verse. How Edvard would love it! He warned him that it was coming and to get his admiration ready.

But Paris was distracting. He had an invitation to visit Switzerland with a French family who had relatives in Copenhagen. A fortnight there, in the Jura mountains, might see *Agnete* finished. In any case it was on his way to Italy.

He went there. More than the wonders of Paris did the grandeur and deep pure colours of Switzerland move him—as when from the stage-coach through a gap in the mountain road

he saw Geneva far below in its moist green, by the sky-blue lake and river, with Mont Blanc violet and white behind. Quite, quite other than the rue Vivienne and the glass-roofed passages with the unplatonic love-shops, was the home he found with the simple, cordial French bourgeois family at Le Locle in the Swiss Juras. Clouds often lay below, snow gleamed above, great dark pine forests stood in noble gloom, there was a stillness and a loneliness that sent him into "a kind of ecstasy", in which he found it almost fatally easy to finish *Agnete*.

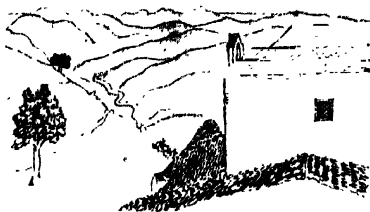
On his last day at Le Locle, he despatched it to Edvard, wrapped in the most ardent hopes, and with much confident gaiety. Then he left for Italy, after a touching leave-taking with his new friends. For naturally they were now his friends. The children cried, the two old aunts who had darned his stockings gave him knitted wristlets to wear over the icy Simplon, and all, even the servants, surrounded him with affection. He could not quite understand it: he had not been able to read them his poems—well, something nice about him there must be; friends grew into his heart so fast.

How pleased the dear friends at home would be with *Agnete* was the thought singing in his soul as he rolled down to Italy over Napoleon's road, mingling the joyous glow of work well done with rapture over the scenery, which he saw as though glimpsing paradise for the first time. This glow and this rapture he lavished in his letters home, written in stage-coaches and inns: those headlong, vivid, generous letters where he did his utmost to share everything, even illustrating them with naïve but telling sketches. At last he would be a credit to his friends; the critics would have to bow, let them only wait until *Agnete* was published. And, oh, the Alps, the cloudlands, the waterfalls, the clear green glaciers, and then—Italy!

Italy was almost too much. Even as soon as Milan, where he arrived near the end of September, Andersen could hardly find words roomy enough to contain the emotions that swelled in him. The skies were twice as high, as pure, as blue as at home. Delicious and gigantic grapes hung in garlands by the roadside and cost next to nothing. The voices of common people melted the heart. Beggars sang heavenly duets. The fretted glory of

the marble cathedral awed him more than Notre-Dame. He vibrated with a feeling that he stood on the threshold of a vital change; a clearer view of life and of himself was dawning on him.

Hence he was able with fair equanimity to withstand the shock of a letter from Edvard which awaited him in Milan. Edvard had read the first part of *Agnete*, and he was not in the very least impressed, except unfavourably. He said it



VIEW OF THE ALBAN HILLS
Drawing by H. C. Andersen

was too subjective, too "lyrical", too derivative, and, worst of all, too pervaded by the old, over-sensitive, morbidly soft-souled Andersen. They had hoped that travel would have improved him, but apparently there was no sign.

With affectionate dignity Andersen wrote back, refuting the technical criticism and pointing out that after all one could not change noticeably in a few months. Nevertheless, he told him, he was changing: a new firmness of character even was stirring in him, and it was lucky for their friendship that this was only happening now. Without this morbid softness of his, he would have too bitterly resented Edvard's unwillingness to drop the formal "you" between them, would have sheared off him for ever. Like a trustful child he had offered his friend the brotherly "thou", and it had been refused. "I cried then, and was silent, but my very softness, my half-feminine softness, made me still cling to you, and then I came to see so many other splendid qualities that I had to love you, and think of this as only one small fault among so many virtues." And he still hoped the second part of *Agnete* might appeal to him.

Meanwhile he could not be sad when Genoa was revealing to him its majesty of architecture, rising in white stateliness, tier upon tier, above a dark-blue sea, or when he saw that the fat greenness of Lombardy was not all Italy—saw on the Riviera the mountains with myrtles and silver-trembling olives, pink

farms with lemon trees, the sea, blue as a frosty northern evening sky, a turreted cliff, pitch-black against it—and flitters of fiery sunset-clouds in the limpid air. Forgotten the unspeakable stage-coaches, the flies, vermin, dirt, and general horror of the inns; even forgotten the nervousness about bandits, not so non-existent as safe friends in Copenhagen inclined to think; forgotten even *Agnete* in the storm of new impressions.

But it was in Florence that the new really began to master the old. A dark, narrow little town, he thought at first, and then—the galleries, the churches. “O Lord, what can I say! Ask the dead what he sees when he wakes and beholds God, and the angels, and new worlds round about!”

Painting and sculpture, never before noticed by him, now pierced alike into his soul. For an hour he sat worshipping the Medicean Venus. At last the revelation came to him, genuinely, not with the mere brain, but emotionally and with humility: Hertz was right, the man who had lacerated him in *Letters of a Ghost* was right! Form was important!

But, admitting this, and even that Hertz had form, was his style not the neat dryness of pen-and-ink drawing, and might he, Andersen, not learn to use the painter’s brush—to unite form and colour, give more lasting pictures?

“If I could only be seventeen again, but with my present feelings and ideas, then I could become somebody. Now all I see is that I know nothing, can do nothing, and life is so short. How am I to learn so infinitely much! This is an emotion I never knew before, it makes me deeply sad.

“My heart grows too big for me here in Italy, and yet it cannot hold all the splendour.”

This was part of the whole book of a letter he wrote to Henriette Wulff, with injunctions to show it to Mrs. Læssø, and many questions about *Agnete*, and what were people now saying about him, especially Edvard, and write, write, write!

If Milan and Genoa and Florence had touched surprising strings in him, Rome played a whole symphony on them. Rome of course had been the goal; it was always the Mecca of the Scandinavian artist; he was going to live there, and, though he

was not immediately so impressed as he had been elsewhere, yet Rome drew, conquered, and held him. Empty and hollow seemed to him any attempt to capture its beauty and influence in words; but he tried, and letters flew northwards, laden with awe, joy, wondering, and despairing inadequacy.

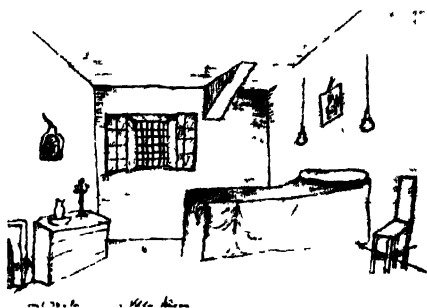
This was a new feeling for the little Hans Christian in him, who had been cockily sure that he could get his lessons without studying them, as well as

for Andersen, the poet by the grace of God, who would conquer fame by mere natural genius; by vision and no revision.

Rome taught without words.

A hundred years ago it was still a Renaissance city, mingled fantastically with the medieval and the classic, surrounded by enormous walls. Roman columns rose casually from vineyards or uninvestigated scrap heaps. Andersen pulled a harefoot on a piece of twine to gain admittance to the Palatine hill. The imperial palaces had sunk to a sort of field with random brickwork protruding; mignonette and wallflowers grew among them. But there was something about the very desolation, something as thoughtful and tranquillising as the centuries of art that everywhere gazed calmly on him. The very day he had arrived in Rome, Raphael's body, which had been exhumed, was buried for the second time in the Pantheon, and he was able to attend the ceremony. While an invisible choir sang sweetly and the priests chanted *Miserere*, a procession paced by, which included all the important artists in Rome, among them the famous Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen, each carrying a wax taper. Andersen loved it, but stole a look off and on at the letters from home, fresh in his hands.

Rome was largely a town of priests and artists. Among the artists the Scandinavians and the Germans formed a group which welcomed Andersen. He was instinctively happy among



ANDERSEN'S BEDROOM IN ROME
Drawing by H. C. Andersen

them: painters and sculptors may have their internecine strife, but they are not so articulately venomous as writers. Although Thorvaldsen once exclaimed to a rival, "Tie my hands behind me, and with my teeth I will guarantee to bite the marble better than you can chisel it", yet Thorvaldsen was the mildest of men. Andersen got a room near him in the Via Sistina; and the great sculptor, whom his time thought nearest to the classic of any, took a fancy to the young poet, whose simple origin, early struggles, and childlike soul much resembled his own.

With such sympathy available, how could Andersen refrain from reading aloud *Agnete* to his new friend, and to anyone else in the studio; even though he was once highly disconcerted to find that Hertz, a new arrival in Rome, was to be present at the performance. But Hertz was tactful and said nothing, while Thorvaldsen, notoriously ignorant in literature, would shake his leonine head with the glorious wavy mane, smile benevolently and say, "Ah, it is from the sea and the woods at home".

Several of the Danish painters were most comradely; they brought Andersen along on their excursions in the romantic environs: Tusculum, Nemi, Albano, Tivoli, Frascati; he revelled in the mist-haunted campagna, picturesque peasants, classic graves by the thick, liquid moonlight of the South, black cypresses, stone pines, fragrance of winter roses and mignonettes, oranges and orange-flowers. ("Dear Edvard, I know that deeds

are better than words, but why cannot good people combine both, as the orange tree does fruit and flowers—why don't you write?")

Christmas Eve, the Scandinavian artists had decorated a laurel for the centre of their feast, but the Pope-sovereign only allowed such levity outside the walls. After the long, noisy, and fraternal merriment



VILLA BORGHESE, THE SCENE OF THE
CHRISTMAS FEAST

Drawing by H. C. Andersen

had finished, they had to knock on the gate to gain admission to the city. "*Chi è?*" ("Who goes there?") and the reply "*Amici!*" thrilled in the scented warm night. Andersen wandered home

with Thorvaldsen, still seeing the long table strewn with roses, the bottles hung with roses, the guests with roses and ivy wreaths in their hair. He had written one song for them, Hertz another, but he had won the silver cup commemorating the feast. Thorvaldsen took off his cape—it was too heavy as they walked along—saying, “It is a Danish summer night”, but Andersen shivered and thought of home as an eternal winter.

Paradise had a serpent, and its name was *Agnete*. The friends had been ominously silent about it for a long while. Then Henriette Wulff, while thanking him for his “excellent letter”—that was the whole book he had sent—did mention the first part of *Agnete*, only to regret that the hero was the poor good Ego himself, bewailing his late sufferings in a sickly manner. Still, this might be discounted as only her usual chaffing way. But then Edvard sent his considered verdict, and it was a bitter draught.

Edvard, having a thoroughly disagreeable job to do, believed in doing it thoroughly. He was not one to neglect his duty, and he was young enough to have duty present itself to him under its most ruthless aspect. And as so often happens with his single-track type of mind, he could hold the idea of conveying the truth but not the complementary idea of the manner of conveying it. Besides he would have scorned this as unworthy of a true friend.

In short, angry sentences the letter snapped out that the publisher had rejected *Agnete*, and that he, Edvard, was doing his best to sell it by subscription. But from all he approached he heard such things as, “Has he committed something again? I was tired of him long ago! He’s always writing the same thing.”

And the reason? You write too much. Yes, I can hear you complacently telling me that when people read *Agnete* . . . but you are very sadly mistaken.

Edvard confessed that he had nearly cried over all the old familiar faults he had found in the drama, but that annoyance choked back his tears. Others shared his feelings. A much esteemed friend of both had tried to read the manuscript, but had sent it back saying he simply could not read so poor a production.

For God’s sake, for your honour’s sake, Edvard adjured, stop writing! . . . Whatever you do, don’t write a book about your

travels, as you hinted to father you might. . . . What limitless egoism, after so many good books on Italy, to think people interested in your sensations. . . .

After a few remarks of a discouraging financial nature, Edvard announced that he was finished with the unpleasantness; admitted he had been a trifle testy, and wound up quite affectionately—his mind and conscience lighter and satisfied.

Edvard was a true friend. Edvard did mean well, but this kind of benevolence is notoriously unappreciated by the recipient. Andersen responded in a tone that was meant to, and did, illustrate a change of character in him, and his resolution not to be patronised. The letter, as the Danes say, was one equipped with both beak and claw.

Edvard's bomb-shell had burst on him at a very bad time. Shortly before, old Collin had had to tell him of his mother's death in Odense, and although his first impulse had been a "Lord, I thank thee!" and a relief that she was no longer suffering feebleness and degradation, yet—now he was completely alone. He had written to her to the last; those faithful, halting attempts to communicate when the blood-tie is the only one, but even that he would miss: they were at least a reminder that someone existed who was bound to love him, no matter what. Now he would have to depend entirely on friends.

And this was how they treated him!

"Weak—derivative—almost beneath criticism", this was the essence of their opinions. In addition he got a bad review of his collected poems. Clutching it he rushed to Thorvaldsen, and the great man took him in his arms, soothing him lovingly. "For God's sake," he urged, "never let that sort of thing touch you! No one who really feels art can be so severe. The beauty of being an artist and of penetrating one's art is that the difficulties become apparent and one's judgment of others milder. Feel your own strength. Don't be led by popular opinion, and go quietly ahead. Peace of mind is necessary for a work of art, and it is disturbed by bad criticism. Thank God, I am dependent on no one, I can live where I like. I can well imagine your unhappy position in needing a public—something it must never be aware of, or one becomes the prey of its whims. I have enough to live on, I don't need them, which is lucky for me. God knows what

kind of an artist they would otherwise call me! You must bear the injustice as well as possible!" And after these revealing words he pressed a kiss on the sufferer's brow.

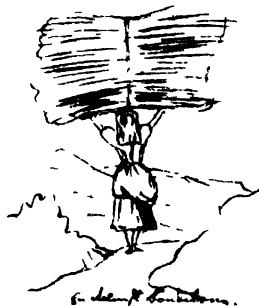
Thorvaldsen seemed to share the opinion which Andersen had himself once expressed to a friend, that "a poet's heart is a southern flower thriving only under a glass bell, and they snatch at it with rough hands as though it were a nettle".

But the most unfortunate part of the whole *Agnete* affair was that Henriette Wulff, Edvard, and the wicked critics were right. No injustice was being perpetrated. *Agnete* was a sad concoction; it was sickly romantic bilge, and, except for a few lyrics, the verses were flat and dreary. It was "literary" in the worst sense, a derivative chaos. So much for the "ecstasy" felt by him in the Juras.

Why could not Andersen see this, see it at least now when at last he had been converted to form, and humbly felt his own previous inadequacy?

He was blinded by having put his own untransmuted personal experience too freshly into it. *Agnete*, the sea-haunted girl of the folk-song, is taken from her earthly lover by a bold merman to his amber castle under the waves, but to Andersen she became Louise Collin taken by the solicitor from her poet: a poet represented in the drama by a whining performer on the bagpipes, in whom Andersen really insulted himself. He was not such a weak, humourless wretch. But the whole Louise tragedy was still too poignant in his heart for him to understand that, though he felt it, he had not been able to convey it.

"Now I have quaffed the poison which friends handed me", he wrote to Henriette Wulff. "It is strange within a few days to hear of a mother's death, the loss of honour, hopes turned into false bubbles. My self-confidence, my courage to strive and work are killed. I am completely dulled; there is nothing more to lose."



ITALIAN PEASANT WOMAN
Drawing by H. C. Andersen

CHAPTER XIII

WRITERS must not be taken too literally in their despair. While Andersen's conscious pride forbade his admitting a word against *Agnete*, a new ferment was already working hard in the unconscious. It had rejected a couple of more sinister tragedies in verse, which he had vainly attempted to start, and it had foamed into something entirely new. This was the book on "travel" that Edvard had heard echoes of, but it was not a travel book. Italy was in a sense the theme, at any rate it was the glorious setting, but there was to be nothing in it which he had not himself experienced: this time it was to be right out of his own life, in Italian dress, from the very beginning. Heiberg had said slightly somewhere that Andersen was only an improviser: very well, he picked it up as a title of honour. The hero of his novel was to be an improviser, an Italian *improvisatore*. The first chapters went well; they had the air and colour of Rome itself. He felt so confident of it that, early in 1834, he was able to take it with him to Naples, where he went with—Hertz.

Old Collin had written to him some time before that he wished him to be friendly with his former critic, and Andersen had obeyed, following Collin and his own tender heart. This succeeded. Hertz was a trifle surprised, but took the outstretched hand, and they became, if not fervent friends, at least friendly acquaintances who enjoyed the confettied Roman carnival together and the trip to Naples.

Meanwhile, what about Edvard, what about *the* friend? How had he, with the bit of temper in him, taken that letter?

He never got it. Old Collin had seen to this too. Benevolent patriarch, he had read the letter first, and promptly burned it, which he wrote and told Andersen with warm, wise nobility.

He said he did not blame him for a single one of his angry words, but he feared a break, which he wanted to prevent. "Just as little as you deserve his reproofs, just as little does he deserve

your passionate anger. He really does care very greatly for you; he is your warmest defender when need be. I shall say nothing about all the trouble he has taken to get *Agnete* published in the most handsome and economical form, and how dauntlessly he himself has packed and sent out all the copies for subscribers and bookseller, but he takes every chance to prove his interest in you, without wanting it to be noticed. . . . Like his father, he does not care to have his heart peered into. . . . I do not approve of his admonishing tone with you, but, dear Andersen, bear with him; everyone has his weakness, that happens to be his; we must bear with each other. . . . When next you get a friendly letter from him, tear up the bad one: those are not memories to cherish."

To Edvard his father merely said that he had had a despairing letter from Andersen on account of his, Edvard's, last letter, and the young man sat down to remedy his error; but, as so often happens, the apology turned partly into a repetition of the attack—here was I, having to defend your book against friends and enemies alike, barely able to make ends meet to publish it, and you write as though it were a divine masterpiece and wonder what you will do with the money.

It did not help much that he finished affectionately, and even diplomatically, urging his friend to keep on writing his reminiscences (the story of his life for Louise had somehow ended with Edvard); it did not help that he mentioned having met a few people who liked poor *Agnete*—Andersen did not tear up the "bad letter", nor did he cease cherishing its memory, if one can be said to cherish a thorn in one's thumb. Other friends began to shine more resplendently in the firmament, and he confided to them that while he dearly loved and admired Edvard, he did wish he need not accept so many services from him—it made for too unequal a relation.

His diary was not so gentle; in it he dramatised: "Edvard, the more I reflect, the more I see your matchless egoism, the enormous injustice I suffer. All is false, she too who wept, who was so gentle, so sisterly: false, false as the whole rotten world. . . . No good awaits me at home; there I am jeered at, despised, deceived—she—he—all! Except Mrs. Læssø, Henriette, Christian, and perhaps the Father."

The Father was Collin. The Henriette he excepted was

Henriette Wulff. It was to her that he poured out first his despair over *Agnete* and then his joy over Naples.

The statues, paintings, architecture of Florence and of Rome had, he thought, stirred him to his limits, but the reckless beauty of Naples kissed a fire into him that he had never dreamed of. "Only now do I know what Italy is!" Forests of shining oranges and lemons, waves of the dark-blue sea pouring on a coast where stocks and mignonette grew wild. He sat at the foot of Vesuvius; it shook; "the pale flame played in the sunlight with the black smoke; the rippling lava sounded like the wings of a thousand birds".



THE HOUSE OF TASSO AT SORRENTO
Drawing by H. C. Andersen

He heard Malibran. "It was a heart dissolved in melody . . . when I left the theatre Vesuvius was flinging fire to the sky, the sea reflected it, the moon shone as clear as day, and a great three-master flew into the harbour . . . here, here is my country. . . . When I die I will haunt the lovely Neapolitan night. Now I am sitting in my room, it is near midnight. I have sent for a bottle of *Lacrimae Christi*, my first time, Vesuvius is in it. . . . Listen, they are singing a serenade in the street! They are playing guitars! Oh no, it is too beautiful! My soul is so full of love, it is long since I have been so happy. My pain is crushing when I suffer, but my joy is indescribable when I am happy. The heat of the South is in my veins— yet I must die in the North!"

Naples very nearly battered down the resistances that Paris had not overcome. Even in Rome, when he chanced to be in an artist's studio and saw the naked breasts of a girl model, he quivered and grew faint, but in Naples he told his diary that he felt the climate in his blood. "I felt a savage passion, but withstood." Another day, "My blood vehemently stirred. Great sensuality and struggle with myself. If it is really a sin to satisfy this powerful desire, then let me fight it: I am still innocent, but my blood burns. Dreams boil in my soul. The South de-

mands its right: I am half ill. Happy he who is married, who is engaged!"

But after five weeks he had to leave Naples, had to leave the red lava mirrored in the dark-blue bay; and, like the snow that buried the colours on his last day there, fell the knowledge that now he was zigzagging North, "where the iron ring awaits my foot".

Still, even in Naples, where he was most foot-loose, he had not yielded to the enticing fire. He remained "innocent"; with the kind of innocence which he was himself to describe as the kind which reads the Bible and always finds the Song of Songs; the innocence that ruins sleep. Was it ethics, religion, sheer fastidiousness? Probably a little of each, but not enough of any one to make a decisive difference. "You will fall in love again", Mrs. Læssø had written him. "Heavens above!" he exclaimed back. "You well know how hideous I am, how poor I shall always be—and those things are considered by *All*, which is very sensible."

He was nearer the truth there, though both the ugly and the poor often find love that satisfies them, but not an Andersen so passionately sensitive to beauty that he fairly had to loathe himself, to feel, at any rate, so inferior to his admired ideals that, much as he desired to, he dared not attack any of the prizes of life, except the one which he had selected as not dependent on beauty and wealth—glory.

But, as in late spring he reluctantly declined northwards, casting last anguished glances at Rome, Florence, Padua, Verona, Venice, there did not seem to be any comfort anywhere, certainly not in glory which he had not yet achieved. "You want to be a writer", he wrote to Henriette Hanck, his Odense friend. "Have you courage to see your best feelings mocked, thoughts born of your clearest moments treated as stupid, and as silly nonsense, to endure the criticism of people far below you, to endure jeers and misunderstanding?"

Mournfully and slightly scornful, he looked at Munich and at Vienna; he had seen Italy. But as usual he found people charming, and they responded. An old lady who had written sixty plays made much of him; his souvenir-book brimmed with friendly verses from writers and artists to whom he had had

letters, or whom he had simply sought. Everyone told him and showed him in their warm, hearty German way what a lively, agreeable, sympathetic young man they thought he was.



CACTUS IN THE GARDEN OF THE
QUIRINAL

Drawing by H C Andersen

He did not fail to report these opinions to the friends at home, verbal advance guards to suggest that he really had changed superbly on this voyage; but the note of confidence was far, far weaker than that of diffidence. Especially did he dread the meeting with Edvard, although he had warned one of their mutual friends that the time was past when he intended to stand for any lecturing and being treated like a schoolboy.

And Henriette Wulff was now in Italy.

Among sentimentality-fearing yet affectionate peoples, such as the Danes, sentiment might either dry up or else choke them had they not arranged opportunities for legitimate display of it—birthdays, holidays, anniversaries of every possible sort, and departures and arrivals, especially for and from “abroad”. Platform tickets must form quite a revenue for the Danish railways—which were, however, non-existent in August 1834, when Andersen, having poltroonishly shaved off his moustache in Hamburg, at last sidled into Copenhagen; going, significantly enough, to stay with the Wulffs until he could find a room. But that same evening found him hurrying to the Collins, where all his dire apprehensions vanished in the warmth of his welcome. It was an evening when the Collins were doubly blessed with outlets for emotion—it was Louise’s birthday and Andersen’s arrival from abroad. Even old Collin had tears in his keen eyes. No child returned to the family could have been greeted more affectionately.

Like a brother too, Edvard met him the next day, bearing the

last waves of the *Agnete* wrath very well, and talking with him as man to man. Tacitly they agreed, one to try to drop the monitor, and the other to leave aside the weeping willow and the clinging ivy, and to insist a little less on the laurel wreath.

Overjoyed, Andersen wrote to Henriette Wulff, that "Now I don't make such great demands, and everything is splendid", in which he surely saw cause and effect for once with luminous clarity. "Not for long have I felt so gay; I am aware of my rightful place, and I see better than I did before where other people belong. If any admonishing preacher comes along, of the kind who would like to educate me, I listen first to see if it is nonsense, and if it is, then he gets it on the nose. The mouth, I notice, is the strongest part of most of my educators; but I am wonderfully polite, listen to a lot of silly talk, pretend to be modest and give others a chance to let their bit of ego shine. I am even praised for my virtuous modesty, though I really had more of it in the old days when I gabbled so much of myself than now when I do the retiring."

Only one person, he confessed, had still treated him successfully as a schoolboy, Henriette's mother, the doughty wife of the naval commander; she who had once written him that he was as insane to aspire to fame as she would be did she aspire to be Empress of Brazil. This hurt, but he rose above it. Why not, when from everyone else he was collecting half-puzzled tributes. Mrs. Læsson said, "He has learned about human nature; he can act the confiding soul perfectly naturally, but he only tells what he wants to. I don't quite understand him."

Old Collin even was at least partly impressed. "I really do believe he is quite a solid fellow now, but his manners are the same."

Louise, and Ingeborg, her sister, decided that "he can be wild with joy, exuberant beyond words, but still so distracted, so queer, you don't really know how he feels".

He himself presented these opinions to Henriette Wulff as a mixed bouquet, without comment, but with the hidden smile that was beginning to lurk on his sensitive lips. At thirty years of age he was at last growing up.

The reason for this mingled joy and distraction was not clear to Louise and Ingeborg, nor perhaps entirely so to himself, but

it was none other than the exaltation and absorption of being on the full tide of creating a book which the depths of his being, the genuine artist in him, knew to be good, to be his own, mirrored not from fashion nor from other writers, but from tingling, experienced life.

He soared up in confident gaiety. Mrs. Læssø heard the first chapter and said he was an angel. Would Odense believe that? Not they! "They saw me without wings, wearing wooden shoes and going with the milk-pail to the village."

But now it was a joke.

There was, however, something which was not a joke, the money question. People with fixed incomes probably shudder more at the artist's financial tight-rope dancing than at anything else about the arts. They conclude that he is either ebulliently unaware of the abyss, or else living in a constant sweat of fear about sickness and old age, not to mention the daily bread. They forget the magic power of habit.

Andersen had been used to dancing over the abyss since childhood, but he had his fearful moments; largely because he was the not uncommon type of artist who likes to pay his way. Sickness and old age did not worry him at this stage, no healthy person under fifty really believes in them, but the daily bread and the daily roof had become urgent questions. He owed nothing, except a small sum to old Collin which he had got to eke out his travel money, but neither had he any prospects. He came to the time when his last penny would be gone in a week, a new month's rent was due, and although his dinners were given him by the usual friends, yet he had no decent clothes nor shoes to wear at their houses. His only asset was the Italian novel. It was finished. He feared Edvard's reproof that he was publishing too much, but he asked him to bargain with the publisher. "Never mind when it comes out, but I must have money!" Incidentally he apologised for having been too tender recently. "I have an ideal Edvard, a charming friend, I reach out my arms to him. It is not you at all; you have far too many faults, dark sides, and puns for me to be able to dream of you!"

Reassured, the actual Edvard did his best, but the publisher was wary. Twenty pounds outright was all he would give, and that only in instalments.

Andersen turned again to the theatre and produced a light little play, which was accepted; he planned more adaptations of foreign works, and, his antennae quivering in every possible monetary direction, he tossed off a simple little pamphlet containing four fairy-tales for children while the novel was being printed.

Hence, early in 1835, he was able to boast to Henriette Wulff that he had written a novel, a play, and some tales for children, "about which Ørsted says that if *The Improvisator* will make me famous, these will make me immortal; they are the most perfect things I have written. But that I don't believe at all; he doesn't know Italy."

His unbelief was genuine; he said what he really thought. Elsewhere he referred to the tales as "those trifles". He thought he had succeeded in his purpose of writing them exactly as one would talk to a child, but it was not their fate which was absorbing him; it was the big "literary" thing—the novel.

It appeared. He held up his arms, half to ward off what he called the customary crown of thorns, half hoping for the laurel wreath. Neither was pressed on his brow, yet the few criticisms which appeared were on the whole as friendly as the pedantic moralising tradition of that time allowed. But, like the sudden sweet warmth of spring, waves of enthusiastic personal approval began to flow around him. Some of the most distinguished of his fellow-authors led the way. Ingemann was his friend of course, but he was an honest friend, and he said it marked the change from youth to manhood. Hertz, the form-worshipper, came around to give thanks and to tell of the conversion of many others. And Hauch—Hauch the austere and noble, who had once despised Andersen—sent a fine sincere apology for his former attitude, saying how sad it was that genuine artists were sometimes not only unappreciated by their inferiors, but by those who should know better. Corneille had not appreciated Racine, nor Lessing Goethe, nor Goethe any of the geniuses who succeeded him except Byron.

Sibbern, the philosopher, whose approval had hitherto helped to make the fame of his rivals, sent the kind of generous and glowing letter that melts all previous misery into warm happy tears, and from all his friends, even the Wulffs, he re-

ceived the so-yearned-for ambrosia of praise. The naval commander had not been able to let go the book, and his wife admitted it was "a pleasing performance". The Collins were neither dazzled nor effusive, but then they were the Collins. The general effect was nearly up to his hopes, and when at last a fervent review appeared, he felt crowned. Although he knew it was written by a friend of his whom he did not especially admire, it did more to make him happy than the most august of the personal tributes—weird is the power of the reviewer's anonymity; in donning it he seems to speak for a whole people.

But Andersen might well be jubilant. *The Improvisator* was a fresh, green, viable shoot on the tree of what has been called "an artist nature's necessary egocentricity". In an Italian setting which was felt and seen and conveyed, he put his own childhood and youth; his mother, the school-years, and the Meislings; the years of struggle; the good people who meant so well and who hurt so much. He let his hero's soft poetic temperament be steeled in adversity, put him through thrilling adventures, guide him to fame, love, and happiness. It was a glowing day-dream, but much of the detail was slyly realistic. It had humour, colour, sensitiveness. It deserved its success, and firmly convinced him that the novel was his sphere, since doubt within can only be defeated by success without. Immediately he began another novel, which was to be of the present day in Denmark, a mixture, as before, of romance and realism. Meanwhile he wrote yet another little pamphlet of tales for children, because wherever he went children seemed to have read the first one. He still did not think much of them, or rather he was slightly irritated because he did not know what to think. The Public, that great Oracle, had given no decisive answer. "Strange to say," he wrote to Ingemann, "some put those above *The Improvisator*. Others, like yourself, wish I had not written them. What am I to think?"

What *was* he to think? How had he come to write them, apart from the fact that he was producing in all possible financial directions? Apart from that fact? No, they sprang directly out of it. The two first tales, "The Tinderbox" and "Big Claus and

Little Claus", were entirely and fervently about money; about magic or tricky means of getting enough of it to fling away. While he sat brooding over unpresentable clothes and broken boots, he had wished in despair for the grand short-cuts of fairy-land, and up from his childhood rose the remembrance of the magic tinderbox, the profitable cleverness of Little Claus, money by the barrel and the bushel, never mind anything else! The hop-pickers and the old spinning-women had filled him full of the race's day-dreams; he had plenty to choose from. Once before, in 1830, he had tried to retell one of those stories, adding it to a book of verse, but it had met with no approval, and it had been dressed in self-conscious literary style. This time they welled straight and pure from memory, in simple racy staccato speech, just as they had been told him, and as he himself had told them to children. Exactly so he put them on paper. It went swimmingly; he enjoyed this. Why not try it on another story and give it a twist meant for Henriette Wulff, who had been so sensitive in a very small matter, and he wrote "The Princess on the Pea". But, as they were for children, why not make one and put himself into it as he talked to them? Like any sensitive person, he was no more fond of children in general than adults in general; but he loved individual children, and with those big-eyed listeners he always gave his invention free rein. There was a little girl next door, the daughter of his friend Thiele; he had just seen little Ida: into the first paragraph of a new story went both of them.

"My poor flowers are quite dead", said little Ida. "Last night they were so pretty and now the leaves are hanging all faded. Why do they do that?" she asked the student who sat on the sofa, because she liked him so much; he knew the grandest stories, and he could cut out such funny pictures, hearts with little ladies in them who danced, flowers and big castles with doors that could open; he was a jolly student!

He could tell her about the flowers, and he did. Some of the ideas were borrowed from Hoffmann, but he had changed them into honey of his own, fresh, sharp linden honey; and if he wrote of a poor doll with whom no one would dance, well, Louise Collin had once refused him a dance, and he enjoyed putting in "so he danced alone, and that's not so bad either!"

These were the tales in the first pamphlet. In the next, which he wrote almost immediately afterwards, he had clearly found that "the egocentricity necessary to the artist nature" could advantageously be poured into even these humble little cups. Had he teased Henriette Wulff in "The Princess on the Pea", he now made up for it in "Thumbelina", where a fairy girl, as tiny and delicate as he lovingly imagined little hunched Henriette, shelters a lark from winter cold and field-mouse disdain; just as he, the poet, had been sheltered by her. In "The Naughty Boy" the Louise episode was artfully summed up. In "The Travelling Companion" a poor lad went out into the world, armed only with goodness and innocence, and he conquered wickedness and won the princess.

All the seven tales were told in a language new to literature: the spoken language, brief, graphic, not afraid of emphatic repetition, but never talking down to children and never sugaring for them. It was honey, not treacle. As in his first good poem, "The Dying Child", the effect was got by the contrast between the things said and the simple, ingenuous manner of saying them; the comic or tragic effect of the unaware child—the true *enfant terrible*.

In form, each story was a perfect Tanagra. Here the lesson of Italy had really borne fruit, but the lowly material concealed the fact from nearly everyone, including the creator. He was really rather disappointed that by some people they should be put above his "big" work; and when two reviews condemned them he decided that he now knew what to think. He would drop the "trifles" and concentrate on novel-writing.

Ironically enough, Andersen, who was so painfully ready to think himself the victim of cruel misunderstanding or ghastly injustice, does not seem to have shed tears over these two reviews, and yet it is safe to say that in all the world's history of literature nothing ever surpassed them for pompous asininity.

They deserve quotation. The first: "Although the reviewer has nothing to say against good fairy-tales for grown-ups, he can only find this form of literature entirely unsuitable for children. He realises, of course, that children are easily impressed by the wonderland, but ought their reading, even out of school, to be

merely for amusement? Whoever wants to give children something to read, ought, at least secretly, to have a higher purpose than simply to entertain them. But in the nature of things no useful knowledge of nature and mankind can be conveyed to them in this manner, at most only some maxim, and it is a question whether the usefulness of this is not too greatly counteracted by the harm that perhaps is done by filling their imagination with fantastic points of view."

Going on to mention the tales by name, the reviewer admits that they might indeed amuse children; but, so far from improving their minds, they might be said to be positively harmful. "Would anyone claim that a child's sense of what is proper would be improved when it reads about a sleeping princess riding on the back of a dog to a soldier, who kisses her, after which she herself, completely awake, relates this nice incident as a—strange dream!"

Or that its sense of modesty would be improved by reading of a woman who dined alone with the sexton in her husband's absence?

Or its sense of the value of human life when it reads of the killings in "Big Claus and Little Claus"?

As for "The Princess on the Pea," "it seems to the reviewer not only indelicate but indefensible, in so far as the child might absorb the false idea that great ladies must always be so terribly thin-skinned".

"Little Ida's Flowers" was admitted to be more innocent, but, alas, it had no moral either!

The good man finished by urging the talented author to remember his higher vocation and not to waste his time in this way.

The second review was much the same in tone, but it stressed the hopelessness of writing in the spoken language, as children ought to be given something above them, something they would have to strive to understand. That is the only thing they respect. Anything else might give them a chance to get on their high horse and be critical, a very harmful thing indeed for children. Andersen was not to be recommended in this venture, but Molbech, the critic, had just published a collection of tales which were models of literary composition, and which in

addition pointed to morals which must be found even in fairy-tales.

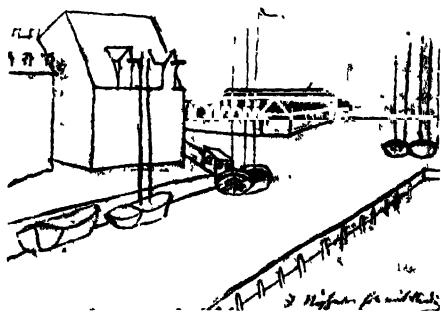
A century later the Soviet Government was to discourage fairy-tales in the schools, on the ground that they glorified princes and princesses.

CHAPTER XIV

SEVENTEEN years ago a boy of fourteen had walked by Nyhavn, the sea-canal reaching into Copenhagen, wondering whether he should throw himself into the black-green water, or implore the captain of one of the schooners moored there to take him back, defeated, to Odense, where all the sensible people told him he ought to go.

Now, in January 1836, one of his two pleasant rooms overlooked this harbour canal; he could almost speak to the cabin-boys who climbed the masts, breathing frostily. Icicles garlanded the little ships but in his room a fire plopped in the stove and there was a mingled scent of incense and roasting apples. Andersen put his brightly slippered feet on the sofa, and sat there wearing an elegant, red-rose-patterned French dressing-gown, the gift of an admiring old lady, a merchant's widow. The tea-kettle purred, the cribboard was full, papers and books and prints lay around, sent gratis by publishers, and on his knees was a letter which he was writing to Henriette Hanck, with a description of these comforts. It ended with a happy sigh, "I think of the poor boy in Odense who wore wooden shoes, and my heart softens, and I bless the good Lord". If he shared his troubles, he also shared his joys in even fuller measure.

No wealth had come to him, but the abyss had ceased yawning so greedily, and "no winter had been so quiet and blissful". As spring came on, *The Improvisator* was published in Germany, and he was delighted with his new novel, *O.T.* So,



VIEW FROM ANDERSEN'S ROOMS AT THE
NYHAVN CANAL

Drawing by H. C. Andersen

generally speaking, were the reviewers, who thought it superior to the first, which it certainly was not. With far too quick and inexpert hand, he had mixed crude and tearful romanticism into really remembered detail from Odense and his travels, and the two blended like oil and water. Except for several minor amusing characters, it was a sad hasty-pudding; but it was received with a sort of respect belated from the first novel, and the author himself was of course very tender about his new-born infant. "It is as I would wish to have it."

Hardly was the ink dry than he began another novel, which was perhaps going to have the ominous title of *Grey on Grey*. "I want to be the first novelist of Denmark", he announced. Very secondary the little fairy-tales, though he wrote an odd one now and then; and he liked having grateful little girls coming up to him with rosebuds and rosebud mouths, offering him both; "but I told them to keep their kisses for six or eight years and let them draw interest".

Summer brought him a country-house invitation, and he spent three weeks in a moated manor with vaulted ceilings, ancestral portraits, woven tapestries, copious wine and cream, a terraced garden fragrant with stocks and roses, a lake and forest, and large, noble rooms. "I really only feel well in large rooms." Daily visitors wanted to meet the author of that charming Italian book, and said they adored it. The hostess inquired what were his favourite dishes, and where would he like to drive. Andersen faithfully reported all this to Edvard, begging him to be sure to tell Louise that the young ladies were simply flocking around the poet; thought themselves like his heroines and himself like his hero. "A great pity, my dear friend, that you don't see me these days, I am so infinitely amiable when I am flattered; you have never known me under these circumstances."

Life was finally beginning to be like his expectations. Even in Odense they seemed to have forgotten the wooden shoes and the milk-pail; there too he was invited and fêted, fed on cream and consideration, and it lost nothing in the telling. For what good was it all if he could not impress Louise's family! He loved wine and cream, but he found he would gladly have exchanged them for beer-soup at the Collins, and all the murmured flattery for Ingeborg's "Oh, the idiot!" and Edvard's fits of laughter over

some silly trick. It made him uneasy to be taken seriously. He begged Edvard to get Ingeborg to send him a "you donkey" or "you idiot" in a letter.

They were his family. Only from them, and perhaps from Henriette Wulff, did he get that curious bracing feeling of being loved for what he was, rather than for anything he did. With them, as with one's family, his former selves still lived; and perhaps the Collins cared more for the utterly naïve and immeasurably trustful boy who had once put himself in their hands than they did for the author with the budding fame. But while Andersen longed for their loving astringency, he also feared and even resented it. He could write himself into a rage with Edvard, could write the kind of letter, always regretted afterwards, "in which I let my feelings be number one and my mind number sixteen"; moments when he wanted friendship to furnish all the emotional content of his life, and when he darkly despaired that his warm love met only Edvard's joky mood or his chilling common sense. "I never had a brother, but had I one I could not love him as I do you, but you do not return it; that hurts me—or perhaps it is just this which binds me to you. No prince had a soul prouder than mine. . . . Our friendship is like the Mysteries, it may not be analysed. Would to God that you might become very poor, and I a rich, distinguished noble!"

Edvard read that sort of thing with his amiably ironic smile. Once and for all he had decided that he appreciated Andersen's good qualities, and that they were friends; but he was not going to spoil him. Edvard, besides, was getting married that summer, and had little time or inclination to fret about such things. His bride was Henriette Tyberg, another Henriette in Andersen's gallery. She was serenely beautiful, calm and good, with more understanding of Andersen's background than the patrician Collins, her own parents having been simple people. Andersen admired her. "The three beauties of Denmark are the beech forests, Jette Tyberg, and the clover fields"—not his worst attempt at essentialising a person. Of a dark, hectic little opera singer he once said, "She looks like a little black coffee-pot boiling over", and of a cautious gentleman, "He is a prudent snail".

But Edvard's wedding did not stimulate his wit. He wrote

touching letters to both of them for it, but kept himself well away in south Fyn. Louise and her fiancé would be there; a triple extract of family atmosphere, weddings, love, children, domesticity, would pervade everything, and he would, after all, feel like a homeless cat, an unmarriageable, bachelor cat, destined to temporary shelters and odd meals, but to no hearth of his own.

He tried hard to get another travel stipend, to fly away again to Italy, "*my bride*"; but it was too soon, he was told. Weddings or no weddings, in Denmark he had to stay, in the climate which he said was compounded of rain, sleet, fog, and mud. And the chain which held him was lack of money. "Oh, how much I have coming to me in a better world: money and love!"

All the more did he try to bask in the illusive warmth of the first rays of glory. Germany was translating his second novel and had received *The Improvisator* with its own grand capacity for sonorous enthusiasm. Appreciation was also beginning to come to him in charming Swedish *cantabile*. He went to Sweden in the summer of 1837, and found great cordiality expressed in the world's most beautifully cadenced language. "As you write, so would I write!" exclaimed Frederikke Bremer, the author, after reading "*The Improvisator*", and she even called *Agnete* a pearl of purest water. They had met on a steamer, and he had told the serious sympathetic woman his life history. The Swedes do not laugh with the fatal ease of the Danes; he felt safer amongst them, and he hoped that their verdict and that of Germany would be heeded at home.

So it really was, or, rather, though his attention was helplessly riveted to any mediocre printed criticism, the fact was that he already had staunch admirers in Denmark. The fairy-tales were living their own quiet life and converting even former opponents. Heiberg declared the third collection of tales, which Andersen had at last published, to be the best he had ever written; a case where the opinion of the little rosebud girls joined strangely in with that of the most sophisticated critic. The new tales were three. The first was "The Little Mermaid", sea-blue, deep and clear, beauty and pathos in epitome. He had written it at the time of Edvard's approaching wedding; at the time when the memory of sweet, hurt hopes was overflowing.

"Nothing I ever wrote has so moved myself while I was writing it", he confessed; and no wonder, since in reality the little mermaid was himself—in her attempt to win the distant beloved mortal prince, though she was handicapped in every way; a foundling, a slave, an outsider, and every step she took was as if she trod on edged knives. She lost the prince, saw him wed another, but her soul rose from the waves into airy loveliness instead of perishing, as she had feared, like sea-foam. Rather a confession of weakness it was, this feminising of himself, but "The Emperor's New Clothes" was masculine enough, a swift, deadly barb, secretly addressed to one of his rivals, a man about whom Hauch had said that he had several fine poetic garments, but God help him if the public ever saw him in his shirt.

Germany, Sweden, Heiberg, and great praise from Hauch and Ingemann for his third novel, fortunately renamed *Only a Fiddler*—one would think, and he did think, that even the Collins would have to join in. It was good to be liked for what one was, but what one did must surely some day count. Detailed reports of his triumphs went to Edvard, but also a long sigh. "You and several of yours smile at this; do so in God's name. I know of course that you are all fond of my personality; that I am as a brother in your house; some time you will be obliged to admit my worth as a writer, which now, I well know, is reckoned by your family and a few others as far below that of Hertz and Heiberg. . . . Perhaps I have great notions of myself, but of course you will know that people have been chattering to me and filling my head with mad ideas. . . ."

The periodical which was his pet aversion had chosen after two years of silence to come out unfavourably against *The Improvisator*, and this quite isolated voice of censure made him behold sky, earth, and sea as one dark fog of malice. And the Collins thought some of the criticism "quite justified". They had themselves been at Andersen a long while about his carelessness in structure, grammar, misspellings, and anyhow they thought a sandpapering good for him on general principles. They had to its highest degree the respectable horror of whatever seemed to be "showing off". Whatever might cause one to show off, such as lavish praise, was therefore frowned on and counteracted with caustic remedies; until a shell of inexpressive-

ness or defensive humour grew on the too expressive soul, and it only toyed shamefully with self-esteem as a secret vice called vanity. Never, never would Andersen understand that when he galloped up to the Collins, hugging newly gathered compliments to his bosom for them to admire and to beam with pride on him, that this was the very moment they automatically shrank back as from indecent exposure, becoming far less affectionate with him than they had been in the days when he thought himself not so worthy of them. He presented his German or Swedish or French nosegay, eagerly inviting them to breathe the fragrance and admit that now at last he was a find to be proud of—and they put cambric handkerchiefs to their long slim noses, shuddering visibly, hoping thus to make the so necessary shell of discretion grow on him. But each was wrong in his estimate of the other's capacities. The Collins continued to think of what was largely the artist's expressiveness and need for reassurance as "showing-off", while Andersen kept on expecting tortoises to have the warm tongue and the wagging abandon of spaniels.

This was the flaw in the slippered ease. "Only in admiration by *all* can I be satisfied", he said once in truthful unguardedness, a sentiment well complemented by another not so sincere but equally true at any rate in regard to its two first statements: "I shall never be rich, never satisfied—and never in love!"

Only a Fiddler, Andersen's new novel, had been received in Germany with almost tearful admiration; Sweden acclaimed it heartily, and though Danish criticism was tepid, the public took to the book very kindly. It was a Danish version of the Improvisator theme, except that the poor young struggling genius, instead of ending in love and happy fame, ended in a lonely pauper's grave.

Far better than *O. T.*, since it was more directly autobiographical, it still had blemishes of a sentimental character, a sort of unmanly whine in it, a too ready giving up, for which he was often reproached.

But this despairing tone was born less of romanticism than of grating facts. His income was by no means keeping pace with his fame. Oh, glory was of course wonderful. "I strive for it as the miser for the clink of gold. Both are probably empty, but you

must be eager for something in this world or you fall to pieces and rot." Yet though France, the giver of literary accolades, was now planning to translate his first novel and printing his biography, and a Russian paper had praised him, and his picture had been lithographed, there was very little clink of gold about all this. *Only a Fiddler* reflected the bitterness of moneyless genius, and the feeling that even love was denied the poor, at any rate the sensitive poor.

When Andersen exclaimed that he could never be in love, he meant that he ought not to be: he could not afford to. It might seem that for a poet he had a very realistic attitude towards love. Carefully he had figured out the financial aspect of it. "I must have two thousand kroner yearly before I can fall in love, and three thousand before I can dare to marry, and before this half impossible has come to pass the young woman will have vanished, captured by another, and I a dry old bachelor—sad prospects!"

But Andersen knew what real poverty was and how extremely unpoetic it could be, and the girl he had in mind belonged to a well-to-do family. It is fair to say that he had her in mind, rather than in his heart, although she was sweetly and tenderly thought of, and the heart soon added a little passionate throb. But that summer he had written to a friend, "I am burning with longing to get married!" and it seems as if this time the longing had found the girl rather than *vice versa*.

She was Sophie Orsted, sixteen-year-old daughter of Orsted the scientist, one of Andersen's oldest and most discerning friends, and Sophie had sat on his knee as a child, cajoling stories out of him with kisses. Now that she was grown-up, for in 1837 one was a young lady at sixteen, she was still trustful and charming with him; she sparkled when he came to his weekly dinner at their house; she always had a great deal to say to him and he to her; it was even beginning to be talked about. Louise and Ingeborg teased him. He invoked his great age of thirty-two, but he listened when a friend said, "You are in love with her, I see. Propose!"

He considered. Propose with what? He had tried in every way to get a fixed income, even a tiny one, had petitioned for library or editorial positions, but with no success. The bread-

fruit tree, he said, began to interest him more than the laurel; he besought his friends to help him get something from the State, a travel-stipend, or, far better, a pension such as several other authors had obtained. However, even should he get a pension of eight hundred kroner, which was the height of possibility, it was not enough to fall in love on; good budget-maker as he had always been, he saw that. Still, his books and plays might bring in the rest. He scurried ardently around, and then fate held out a hand to him.

The King's most trusted minister, Count Rantzau-Breitenburg, a man of wide culture, had read *The Improvisator*, and one day Andersen came home to his little rooms in Nyhavn to hear that this all-powerful man had sent to ask when he might call on him. Andersen, needless to say, flew to the minister, was invited to lunch and received with courteous warmth and gratitude for his writings. Was there anything that could be done for him?—Was there!

The count promised to see what could be done, and Andersen, scarcely daring to believe his luck, did yet so far credit it that he nearly decided to propose to Sophie.

But before he had found the opportune moment, he awoke one day out of his faint rose-dreams to learn of her engagement.

It hurt. He went to congratulate. He pressed her hand for the first time, pressed it twice, but to his own surprise he felt only a quiet suffering. She had incarnated love and youth for the time being; what really hurt was his feeling that he seemed to be saying farewell for ever to that divine pair. To his diary he said: "Now I am home again, alone—alone! As I shall always be! . . . Now I shall never marry; no young girl is now growing up for me; day by day I become more of a bachelor. Oh, only yesterday I was among the young, to-night I am old! God bless you, dear, beloved Sophie; you shall never know how happy I could have been with property and with you!"

"With property and with you." The order was a mere humble recognition of fact. The dream of Sophie had vanished. Must the other go too? Property he called it, but it was security he meant; though in no retired-from-effort sense of the word. More fervently even than a wife, he desired a minimum of

money; just enough of a fixed income so that he need not let his muse take in washing to earn the rent and the daily bread. Solved as the problem of bare existence might temporarily seem, it came back to him with dreadful persistency. There could be no breathing-space, no time to think before writing, no healthily fallow periods, until he had got the blessed wall to his back of Something Fixed, be it ever so little—the desire of every sincere artist who cares more for his art than for living “artistically”.

“Oh, would that I might for ever erase half of what I wrote in order to get relief for my soul and nourishment for my body,” he wrote to a friend, “my worth would be increased. No man hates more than I to talk of money or income . . . but here, for once, I must tell you: the Plague-Goddess Need is to blame for my greatest faults. . . . In my childhood I learned nothing . . . my soul’s strength was undirected, it burned like a will-o’-the-wisp. When I did go to school, I was treated so harshly, so like a machine, that it is a wonder I survived. I had to take every step of my creative way publicly, in front of everybody; it has been a play with the plate going around to get the artist enough to eat. . . . I am as poor now, as helpless as when I came through the gates of Copenhagen with my things in a bundle—and less happy, for then I was full of beautiful dreams, and now I realise how much I lack, and how almost impossible it is to remedy it.”

He had thrown all his hope of salvation into a letter to Count Rantzau-Breitenburg, imploring him to plead his cause with the King for a pension of eight hundred kroner; but the answer was as slow in coming as the answer to all money-appeals seems to the appellant. He grew nervous, feverish, weak, ill; at least he thought he was ill, “but my friends who know me so well, which is more than I do myself, tell me that I imagine this sickness; well, then, what I imagine hurts me!”

But in the gloom there had been one ray of light, of just the kind of light which meant more to Andersen’s peace-loving soul than any other. He was walking in the street when a fat little shabby man came up to him, a man whose bulbous red face & ill frightened his dreams, and whose “you’re stupid, superficial” still drilled cruelly into his memory. This was Meisling, the rector of the Slagelse and Elsinore schools, his former tormentor, the man who had prophesied that his writings would be sold for

waste-paper by the printer and that the author would end in an insane asylum. Andersen must have started back, frightened, but Meisling held out his hand and begged him to listen; he said he had to tell him that he had not been kind to him in school, that he had been mistaken, that now it hurt him, and that he knew himself to be far below his former pupil. "Forget my severity", he pleaded; "mine is the shame and yours the glory."

With tears in his eyes, Andersen took the outstretched hand and tried to shelter the man from his own confession. Meisling had hurt him more than any other human being; he had scarred his vital self-esteem in a way that no repentance could efface, but although Andersen could suffer, could resent, and even hate, his pride melted joyfully when reconciliation took away the need for it.

The meeting with Meisling, the complete change-about in their relations, had something symbolic in it, coming as it did on the threshold of a year that was to be a turning-point in the poet's life. The name of that turning-point was forty pounds, eight hundred kroner a year: a pension granted him by royal resolution in May 1838. At last, as he said, he had a little bread-fruit tree in his garden and needed no longer to sing for crumbs. He had more: he was now himself, so to speak, published before the eyes of all as a State-recognised author. Now he had a standing, a real official rating. Being a poet by the grace of God was of course more important, but by royal resolution was not so bad either.

The happy news had leaked out a little before its time, making the spring radiant. He culled a few Copenhagen remarks and forwarded them to Odense: "Andersen is actually foppish; he has turned into the greatest swell. He is wearing a coat with velvet lining, and a hat like an umbrella, and what a figure he cuts! He's getting handsomer and handsomer!" Henriette Wulff scolded: "Before you were so nice and original, now you might as well be a chamberlain or an officer; you're only a fine gentleman". Ingeborg Collin Drewsen laughed: "Our friend is getting beautiful in his old age, but he's full of the same old nonsense. Is that a *célèbre poète*? You ought to know him the way we do!" And an aged lady-in-waiting sighed: "You

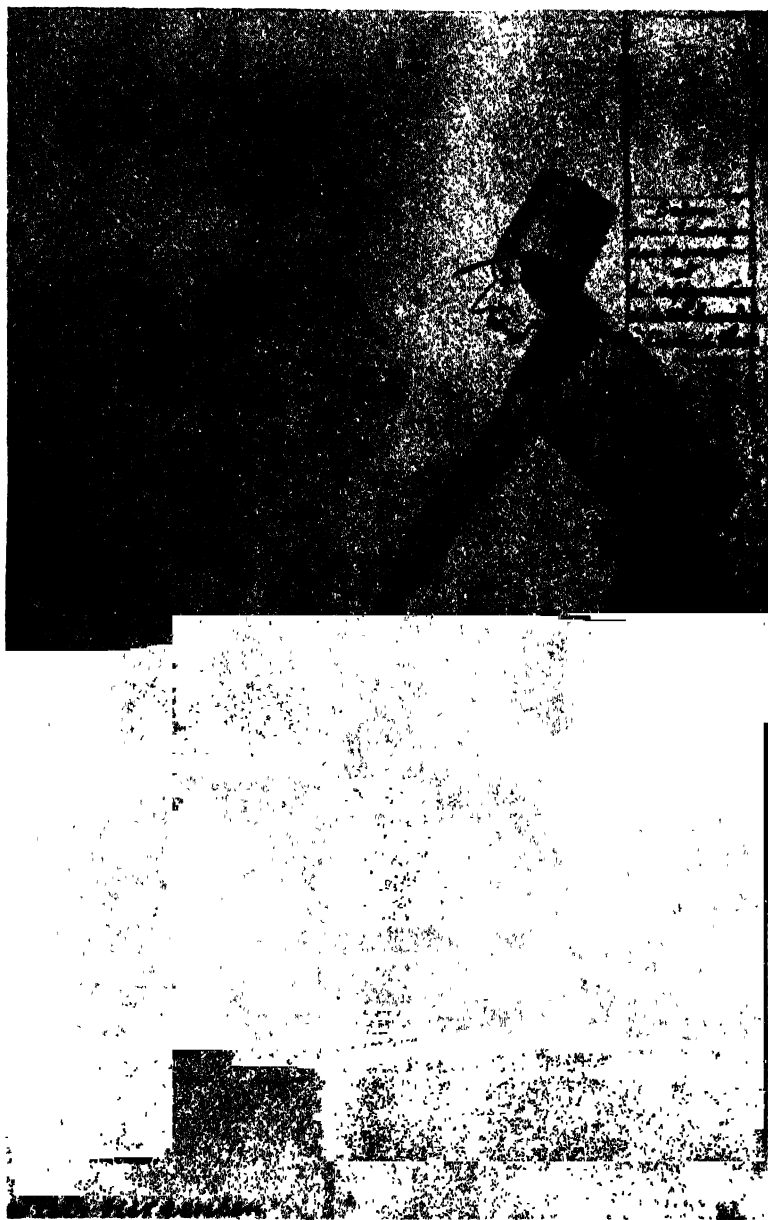
know how to dress now, your tone is good, you are mentioned in the papers, even in a French paper—who knows, perhaps; you never can tell—oh, how happy I should be if you could some time go to court!”

Ørsted said, “Now you cannot complain, all appreciate you; your reputation is solidly founded”.

Thirty-three years of age, State-recognised, well dressed, hair becomingly curled every day—it did seem as though life were worth living. His heart housed memories of only tender sadness, plus a temporary and painless adoration of a gifted actress; which irritated Louise Collin into sisterly anger. She would not allow him to fall in love with anyone from the theatre world. Louise was still unmarried; it was the day of long engagements, faithfully kept as a general rule; yet an engagement was not a marriage, and Andersen was delighted with Louise’s somewhat heated concern.

His orbit was now beginning to touch the centre of the city’s social life. He was asked for verses on every possible occasion; he shone especially at the great Thorvaldsen feast; he went elegantly to elegant dinners, and he moved from his lodgings by the canal to two rooms in a good hotel; they were small and high up, but right opposite the Royal Theatre.

Whether it was this neighbourhood or the fatal Hegelian dictum that only poetic drama was worthy of a creator, or the fact that plays brought in more money than books, he decided to underpin his reputation by doing a poetic drama. Aware that plots were his weak point, he borrowed one from a French short story about a noble mulatto who wins the hand of a white countess against terrific obstacles. It was himself and Louise again, as well as the topic which perennially appealed to him, the outsider who gets inside, and he threw himself into the writing of it with ardent energy, filling the verses with hot passion. This time they were not going to be able to accuse him of having a milk-sop hero! Nor with errors of detail. “I am devouring all the books on Africa and America; feel quite at home among the blacks and with ostriches and lions; dream of slimy snakes in the wet grass, and limpid air with the trailing stars of the country of Columbus. The verses are so polished that nobody can understand my perseverance.”



CARICATURE OF ANDERSEN COMING FROM THE HAIRDRESSER, BY JÜRGENSEN

As it progressed, he shared it, of course, with his friends, and even Edvard was impressed; though Louise and Ingeborg said it was nastily Creolish, and Mrs. Læssø said it was scorching. He laughed. This was to be his masterpiece; the first he had ever written. And, as along with having a breadfruit tree in one's garden, there is no pleasanter state for an author to be in than the state of conviction that he is writing a masterpiece, he never felt so well in his life. All the sad symptoms of disease he had dismissed with his usual fact-sharing frankness as a passing case of "worms", and his interest in clothes and curls were proof enough of lively health. He even admitted to physical well-being, and that he did really at last seem to be "the rage". "Never have I received so much attention, whether it is because of the super-recognition from abroad, or the money I spend on tailor and hairdresser."

It did not occur to him except vaguely that his Tales for Children might have something to do with his popularity, although he noted with satisfaction that the leading actor and actress were reciting them with great effect at various entertainments and begging for more, and that people kept coming up to him and praising their wit and their originality, "as though they were something new I had written yesterday". In spite of his tropic absorption in *The Mulatto*, he found time to publish another little pamphlet of tales, "The Daisy" and "The Dauntless Tin Soldier" being two more tender and whimsical variations on the theme of the humble and handicapped; while "The Wild Swans" was a long folk-tale, retold with all his feeling for the persecuted innocent suffusing its wise and charming naïveté. The wicked queen wanted to bewitch the young helpless girl and told a toad to hop on her in the bath, "and give her an evil heart that it may pain her". But the toad changed to a flower when it had touched the unchanging innocent.

CHAPTER XV

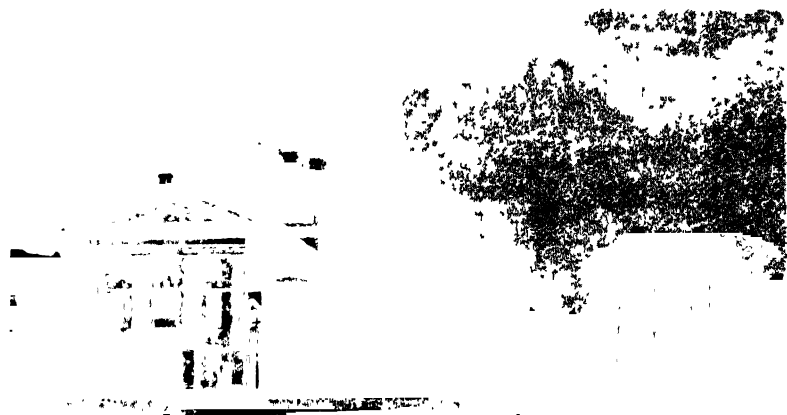
HOWEVER, the fairy-tales were to Andersen mere little casual daisies in the garden where he was now planting the great palm of his play. *The Mulatto* was at last done. He hardly knew which he felt most: the joy of finishing it or the grief of losing a front tooth. "Had I but my tooth, never mind about *The Mulatto*!" But he minded quickly enough when Molbech, his old dusty enemy at the Royal Theatre, rejected it. His rage and astonishment knew no bounds; and, as he so often said, nothing so stirred him to vanity as under-estimation. "Molbech wants to trample me in the dust, and yet I shall live, live when he is only a dead name in an old tome. Injustice wakes all my self-confidence. I shall be a poet in whom Denmark will feel honoured. They shall bow to me like the sun and the moon in Joseph's dream."

Although Denmark so promptly got the blame, public opinion was really with him. He had read the play to most people, and the colourful, romantic, though somewhat bombastic piece was quite in the taste of the time. It took only a few weeks to break down the opposition, and *The Mulatto* was accepted for performance the following autumn. Andersen settled down to enjoy the summer—it was 1839; and though he began planning a still vaster and more world-inclusive poetic drama, this time about the Wandering Jew, he contented himself for the present with a few more tales; which, he had now discovered, could be useful for satire as well as for emotion. A bright little vaudeville also fell easily from his pen, and it too was accepted.

It was an almost cloudless summer. From Sweden, whose enthusiasm for him had risen rather than abated, he was invited to visit various manor-houses where even the little thrill of incipient infatuation was not missing, and Denmark also produced aristocratic invitations. He spent weeks of princely ease at a castle in Fyn, and attended a reception to the Crown Prince and Princess, his old acquaintances from Odense. The royal

pair praised his verses to them before all, and invited him to read *The Mulatto* aloud to them in Copenhagen. Thus the wish of the old lady-in-waiting was fulfilled: Andersen went to court, and he was a success.

But now the time was at hand when *The Mulatto* was to appear before the greater court of the public. The night before, Andersen did not close an eye, and he was up at dawn. From his window he saw the palm-tree scenery being carried into the theatre, saw the posters put up, saw people begin to stand in line for the



ROYAL THEATRE, COPENHAGEN

tickets – when couriers dashed through the streets: the King had died.

For two endless months, until after the funeral, the theatre would be closed. Frederik the Sixth had been the gruff, good, homespun sort of king whom Andersen reverently loved, but he could not help feeling that his death was inconsiderate. "Everybody who regretted the King's death also felt sorry for me."

However, Frederik the Sixth provided him with the sable drama of a royal funeral, and the gates of the theatre did at last open again, with every seat sold, for the first performance of *The Mulatto*, early in 1840.

In the first, the second, and the third act the author sat hot and cold through the quiet lukewarmness of the audience. But the temperature rose in the fourth; in the fifth he knew that he

had them; and the applause at the end almost frightened him—it surpassed anything he had ever heard. Edvard Collin gave a dinner for him, and the new King commanded his presence, complimenting him highly on his success. Did Christian the Eighth remember that as Prince-Governor of Fyn he had told the audaciously aspiring boy that he could at most hope to be helped to become a cabinet-maker? Probably not, but it surely added to the piquancy of Andersen's delight. Soon the King sent for him again, presenting him with a jewelled tie-pin, and consoling him gently because of a slight thorn among the roses: people were beginning to stress the fact, undenied by the author, that the plot was not original. But, original or not, the sweeping success of the play continued, and the popular admiration of the author likewise. "If you want to know how I really feel," he confessed to Henriette Hanck, "I am almost completely happy; never have I met with so much appreciation; people who overlooked me before now meet me in the friendliest way . . . now I must climb higher."

It was Sweden who lifted him to a dizzy summit. He was visiting in Lund, the ancient university town. Unfortunately a drilling toothache kept him from enjoying a banquet in his honour, but when he was told that the students would be coming in a body to give him an ovation, he forgot toothache and all in the terror that shook his limbs. When they came marching, several hundreds of them, and he appeared on the steps of the house, they all swept off their blue caps, standing reverently bare-headed before him. His knees trembled; he needed all his strength not to burst into tears. He was suddenly struck by his unworthiness; were they not simply making game of him? Frantically his eyes searched every face for a dubious smile; but there was none, only young, serious, upturned ardour met him. The spokesman stepped forward and spoke fervently, gratefully to "the Master"; there were cheers, three times three, and at last he could rush to his room and give way to emotion. What had they said: "When Europe soon speaks of the great bard, H. C. Andersen, do not forget that the students of Lund first brought you the public tribute which you deserve!"

He had dwelt for a moment in bliss, and it was a shaking experience. In fact—was it bliss? As he had stared madly to see if

anyone smiled in the crowd, so he now listened sharply to hear if there were dissenting voices when he got back to Copenhagen. And as they can always be heard by listening for them, his whole attention was soon bitterly concentrated on the indefatigable success-haters, who went about saying that of course Andersen had not really invented the plot of *The Mulatto*, and that he was incapable of inventing any dramatic plot. Had he been a horse waiting for the bite of a gadfly to determine the direction in which to run, he could not have plunged more quickly into a new poetic drama, which this time was to be absolutely out of his own head. *The Moorish Maid* was its title, and the feverishly concocted plot was again based on the topic of the noble out-cast, this time feminine and in a Spanish setting, but forced and flat in ideas and execution.

To his horrified amazement no one seemed to share his own glowing enthusiasm for it. After the cash success of *The Mulatto*, the theatre directors did not dare to refuse it; but Heiberg's wife, Denmark's best actress, for whom the leading part was expressly written, refused, on her husband's advice, to take any part, and though Andersen literally threw himself at her feet, she kept on refusing. The devil and his grandmother could not have appeared more loathsome to him at that moment than Heiberg and his wife, and after an interview with them he noted in his diary, "completely furious, an insane night". Worse still, when he went to the Collins for solace, he found the obnoxious couple dining there, being fêted there, and he wrote down, "Mirth for them *there*. Sensually wild. Despair!"

In vain did his sage friends, Hauch and Ingemann, write and urge that the poet's best reward is interior satisfaction, not exterior approbation: he simply could not understand them: they might have self-sufficient cores, but he needed approval as an oyster needs a shell.

But there was more than the trouble with the play; more than the love of the Collins for the Heibergs. Louise Collin was at last going to be married to her solicitor. That summer Andersen had seen his first love, Riborg Voigt, again, with her husband at a concert; and though he felt that "memory is like amber, rub it and the perfume returns", yet his feelings for Riborg were

now definitely in amber, his live emotions clustered around Louise. The news of her impending marriage cut into him, revived all the disappointment. He decided to leave the country; decided that he had to be far away both for her wedding and for the first performance of the play. "I will leave a country where so many wish me ill. I will fly from all these things that kill me."

A voyage to Italy, Greece, and Turkey was planned; in the blessed word Constantinople he found some comfort, and he had almost money enough. The Collins organised a big farewell festivity. There can be little doubt that they did it with the kindest of intentions and with the greatest of relief. To have had Andersen around for the wedding in the double role of despairing lover and author would have been too much even for their equilibrium.

Late in October 1840, he left Denmark for nearly a year.

In the applause and distraction around that dark pair *The Mulatto* and *The Moorish Maid*, no one, hardly even the author, had been much stirred by a slim little book, published the same year. Yet it was the first half of *Picture-Book without Pictures*, a series of poems in prose; light, simple, firm, and easy, some of them masterpieces in miniature. The narrator was the moon; it told the stories it saw and heard each night. One of the stories was not so poetic, but that night at least the moon's name was Hans Christian Andersen.

"I peered into an editor's window; it was somewhere in Germany. The furniture was good, there were many books, and a whole chaos of papers. Several young men were present; the editor himself was at his desk; there were two little books to be reviewed, both of them by young authors. 'This one has been sent to me', the editor said; 'I haven't read it yet, but it's nicely got up. What do you think of the contents?' 'Oh!' someone answered, who was himself a poet, 'it's rather good, perhaps a little flat, but—after all, he's young. The verses could be better! The ideas are wholesome, good old ordinary ideas of course, but what can you say! Can't always be inventing something new. You might praise him, although I hardly think he'll ever do any-

thing big in poetry. But he's well read, he's a splendid orientalist, a good critic himself. It was he who wrote that fine notice of my *Dreams of Domestic Life*. And one ought to be kind to the young.'

" 'But he's a perfect ass!' another man in the room said. 'What could be worse in poetry than mediocrity, and he'll never rise any higher!'

" 'Poor devil,' said a third. 'You've no idea how fond his aunt is of him. She's the one', he told the editor, 'who collected all those subscribers for your last translation.'

" 'The good woman! Indeed, yes—yes, now I have given the book a brief notice. "Unmistakable talent, a welcome gift. Flower in the garden of poetry. Nicely got up, etc." But the other book, it looks as though I'm expected to buy it! I hear it's being praised. He has genius, don't you think?'

" 'That is what everybody is shrieking,' the poet said, 'but I think it rather crazy. His punctuation is especially—that of a genius!'

" 'Might do him good to get a drubbing, stir him up a bit, or he'll be thinking too well of himself!'

" 'But isn't that unfair!' a fourth exclaimed. 'Why brood on the details, why not enjoy what is good in it, and there is a great deal. He does put them all in the shade!'

" 'Good Lord! Oh, well, if he's a real genius, then he can stand a little hauling over the coals; he gets praise enough privately anyhow; don't let us drive him insane!'

" 'Unmistakable talent,' wrote the editor, 'note his usual slovenliness. Two hiatuses on page twenty-five, example of his unfortunate versification. Study of the classics recommended, etc.'

" 'I went away,' the moon said, 'peered through the window of the aunt's house. I saw the honoured poet happily sitting there, the tame one, adored by all the guests.'

" 'I sought the other poet, the untamed one; he was also at a great party, in a patron's house, where the other poet's book was being discussed. "I intend to read yours too," Maecenas said, "but, frankly—you know I am always frank with you—I don't expect much of you. You are really too wild, too fantastic—but as a human being I consider you most respectable."'

"A young girl sat in the room and read in a book:

"Down in the mud with the genius,
The mediocre up to the sky,
What a very old story it is,
And how it keeps on being new!"

Here ended the Moon's story. This neat little bouquet for critics was certainly suitable for most of them; but when *The Moorish Maid* appeared on the scene and was the comparative fiasco it deserved to be, and when it thereafter appeared in print with a preface in which the author at once wept, boasted, and threw stones, one critic at least found material for a reply which was not negligible.

He admitted that criticism of Andersen had often taken a petty and pedantic form—these demands for better punctuation, more academic language, "taste", scholarship, etc.—but he insisted that, stupid as it was, criticism had been fumbling for something real. Andersen would have to change, but it was a change of heart that was needed. He must acquire firm convictions and a *pure* love of art; in short, his whole literary character must win decision and solid core—or he could never be a dramatic writer, no matter if all Christian and Mohammedan papers shouted his praise and his works were translated into all the tongues of men and angels.

How does he choose his subjects? the critic went on to ask, in tones of just, cold reason that seemed to echo from the eighteenth century. What inspires him to poetic production? Is it the force of a higher necessity? Is it the result of inner development, the ripe fruit falling from the tree? No! He confesses it naïvely himself, in this preface. People said he could not write a long drama in prose—and at once he wrote *The Mulatto*. Someone else remarked in a newspaper that he had borrowed the plot—and that decided him to invent a plot: result, *The Moorish Maid*.

Exterior and accidental, only concerned with the struggle to be famous. Vanity! And what a pity that was in a man who had real gifts! But if those gifts were to be realised, he must be driven out of his imaginary Eden; he must learn not to dismiss all criticism as hateful malice; he must learn to use it as an incentive towards serious self-criticism.

Almost under the fastidious nose of the very intelligent man who wrote this were the little fairy-tales. Exterior stimulus had caused them, and yet they had flowered from the inner being of the poet; they were documents in his development, full of "decision and solid core". But, in a way, the critic was right: as right as anyone could be who still breathed in the age of reason.

CHAPTER XVI

MEANWHILE, fleeing from what his fine antennae warned him was going to be a scene of grief and disaster, Hans Christian Andersen veered southwards through Germany; stopping often at the houses of admirers, noting how almost unbelievably well known he was, and letting the exterior world flash its panorama on his sensitive mind: almost as sensitive as the new invention whose products he first saw in Augsburg—the daguerreotype. People's features, the very expression of their eyes, were here faithfully reproduced, better than in steel engravings, and it took only five or ten minutes to take a picture. He had heard of this, had long been enthusiastic about it, but even it paled before the most thrilling of all the new: his first experience of the railway.

He admitted to railway fever, and it was heightened by his arrival in the station, where the noise and smell and confusion were bewildering. He noticed that the carriages lay like gondolas along a quay; he saw locomotives scuttling about on many criss-cross iron bands: chimneys seemed to wander hither and yon; everything in fact appeared to be on legs and to whistle, snort, and spew steam. He foresaw that the carriages would upset, limbs would break, things explode into the air, or be crushed against other carriages: but he screwed up his courage and stepped through a real door into something which after all looked most reassuringly like a regular stage-coach, only much wider.

He held his breath. The first sensation was a gentle tug, a child's hand might be pulling them, and then speed insensibly gathered, like a sleigh gliding over snow. He looked out of the window. Galloping horses could rush no faster, and then faster yet: this was like flying surely, and still he was not shaken: he felt none of the unpleasant air pressure he had expected. Something red flashed past, it was a signal flag; the field close by was an arrowy stream, it hurt the eye to look at it; but things further away were quite discernible, and further still the landscape was

stationary enough to be amply admired. He laughed at the frantic horses and cows—how superior was man!—he chatted with a neighbour, he ventured to peep into a book, and then they were in Leipzig! Sixty miles in three hours: that was what you might call travelling; that was rivalling the migrant birds!

He pooh-poohed the idea that this was the end of the poetry of travel; he knew too well the tightly packed stage-coaches, dust and heat in summer, cold and bad roads in winter. And were you not free to get off at a station and admire Nature until the next train came? Of course you were, and he left the railway with a kind of reverence, as well ~~and~~ a sigh, when he thought of the stage-coaches that awaited him in Italy.

Soon he stood in Florence in a dark winter dawn; the stage-coach was to call for him at three, but the bells struck four, five, and six before it came. One passenger had taken an hour to say good-bye to her daughter; another, an Englishman, had been asleep; but finally they were all gathered up and could start.

After the usual tedium, dust, and dirt of a stage-coach voyage he was at last again in Rome—Rome that had haunted him since 1833 with memories of fragrance, sunshine, warmth, beauty, and friendliness. It had healed him after Louise's engagement and the failure of *Agnete*. Now it might at least aid him into convalescence after Louise's marriage and the failure, which he soon learned, of *The Moorish Maid*. His three women friends—Henriette Hanck, Henriette Wulff, and Mrs. Læssø—either through mistaken kindness or through sheer fear, informed him in their letters that the piece had been greeted with applause both in the theatre and the press, but he had previously received a sober and laconic bulletin of disaster from the Collins, who, alas, had to be believed. It knocked him into a bottomless pit of despair. And Rome too was in the conspiracy. The winter was bad—raw, wet, grey, and stone-cold as only Italian winter can be. The Tiber rose and dirtily flooded the streets. There were storms and even touches of earthquake. Fever raged in the town. His lodgings were large brick-tiled rooms, empty and draughty. A few sticks tried to burn in the vast fireplace; he sat by it, wrapped in his cloak, shuddering with fever, chill, toothache, and memories. Bitter little verses escaped from him, re-

flections on worshipped women to whom one gave one's heart, and who murmured "How good he is", feeling "He is not handsome enough"; and dear friends who collected a goblet full of poison and said, "Drink it, this will do you good", and people for whom one sang one's best, and who said, "Oh, he borrowed that from Heine!"

And the friends? The dear, jolly artist colony of Rome? He kept away from them. He felt spotted with failure: they must have seen the newspapers which had so cruelly chastised him, saying he had no philosophic point of view about life or the world. Ah, he would show them. He would write his great epic about the Wandering Jew, and it would contain the very innermost meaning of Everything. The main theme would be the persecution of the Divine through all the ages.

Holst, a gentle fellow-writer, who came to share his lodgings in February 1841, was horrified at Andersen. Where was his overflowing good-nature, cajoling charm, bubbling eagerness to please? He was capricious, venomous, full of an almost insane distrust. Holst had all he could do to soothe him a bit, and to drag him away from dreary Rome to Naples. But it was equally cold and wet at Naples. Toothache undermined Andersen's temper for several weeks, and an attack of fever nearly ended his life; or so he believed, thinking himself saved only by a drastic blood-letting. After this he wonderingly admitted that he felt better, both mentally and physically. Perhaps also the fact that good King Christian the Eighth sent him a sum of money large enough to enable him to take ship for Greece and Turkey without financial worry had something to do with it.

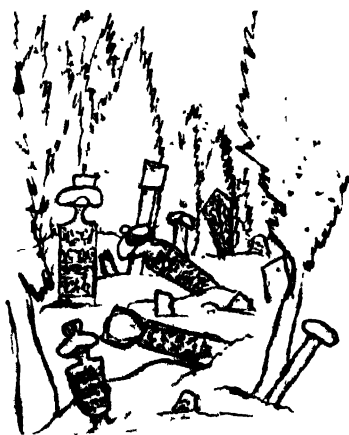
At any rate, when he stood on the deck of a French ship looking back at the Bay of Naples, glorious above and a floor of billowing orange and lemon peels below, he found himself sighing with deep relief to be going away. Away from Europe, away from the morbid and the hateful. The open sea beckoned; its fresh breath poured health through his blood, its sweet blue rounding line calmed his spirit.

The subtly thrilling names of Greece—"dust, yes, but classic dust—beggars, yes, but Greek beggars"—the richly coloured shows and vibrant life of Smyrna, Constantinople, and the

Balkans, were with him and in him when in July 1841 he arrived back in Copenhagen. Now he was a real traveller. He, who was afraid of a little dog or the rumour of a bull, had crossed from the Black Sea to the Danube, a territory disturbed by civil war and brigands, and this against solemn official warnings. He had experienced the really primitive as well as the beautiful and the interesting, and it had flooded away the last of his passion for Louise. He was able to rejoice in the warm welcome of the Collins, and to greet her as a friend. He was even able to rise above a belated unfavourable criticism of *The Moorish Maid* and the continued, inexplicable admiration the Collins cherished for the Heibergs, because he was in the happy throes of putting down his travel impressions. Soon they were published as *A Poet's Bazaar*, a mixture of stories, little prose poems, people set down with living freshness and a general sense of actually travelling with the writer. It was full of his innermost attractiveness: glinting humour, sharp observation, and above all, of his gift for seeing stories and telling them.

With his bad German and worse French or minimal English, or simply with sign language, he was yet able to reach out to people and establish contact with them: whether it was with a Wallachian boy or a little Turkish girl or a Persian merchant. Bursting to communicate with the Persian, he could think of only Hebrew as an allied language, and of Hebrew he could remember nothing except the first line of Genesis, which he produced, pointing at the same time to the starry sky.

Whereupon the Oriental smiled and said, "Yes, sir, verily", verily", which was all he knew of what he believed to be Andersen's language.



Turkish Graves
from the year 1841

TURKISH GRAVES
Drawing by H. C. Andersen

This reaching-out of his being towards other people, partly from imaginative curiosity, partly from a yearning to be liked, was not always appreciated by the bourgeoisie, who discouraged



VIEW OF CONSTANTINOPLE
Drawing by H. C. Andersen

curiosity, or by the literary, whose strong point was certainly not affection; but there was a group of people to whom his social qualities especially appealed, and that was the cultured nobility. From now on he was to spend more and more of his summers in their comfortable country manors, and if they kept him for weeks at a time, beseeching him to return as of right every year, it was not because he strove to please them (many who were not invited also did that) but because he had gifts which made him an easy and charming companion. He could talk. He could go out for a walk and could come back loaded with vivid and

amusing stories; in fact, one of his patrons had long ago exclaimed, "It's a lie, the devil take me but it's a lie. Why don't things like that ever happen to any of us?" A question in which perhaps there was more sense than he realised. The gentry in the manors saw the value of having a person around to whom "things like that" happened; and they sighed with a certain relief when they saw that although Andersen was fundamentally good-natured, yet he did not frown at a little sparkle of gossip at the tea-table. He joined in, and with all the more gusto since his joy in retailing the picturesquely human so often had got him into trouble with old Collin.

Was he vain? It had never been supposed by the manor population that human beings were anything else; the whole training of ladies and gentlemen was towards a delicate mutual recognition of the ego's right to a place in the sun of flattery. Andersen might be a bit difficult, a trifle quick to take offence, sometimes

moody, temperamental in short, but they knew he had the justification of a genuine temperament, and it was still the age when literature was venerated. A little earlier than this, but not yet entirely out of key, were the two young girls who revered a great poet and wished to behold him. Hearing that he took a walk in a certain park every day, they waited in it for hours to see him pass. He approached; they stood up. He passed. They did not see him, because they dared not lift their eyes as he strode by.

Not quite such tributes were paid to Andersen—it was hard to see him as personally romantic—but enough pleasant deference came his way to make the visits a welcome change from Copenhagen. These counts and countesses were not his friends, of course, in the way that he well knew the Collins or the Wulffs, or Hauch or Ingemann were; the relationship with them was not really personal. But that too had its advantages: he was safe from good advice and well-meant criticism. Once across the moat encircling the manor, and he said he felt as he had once felt in the Blue Grotto at Capri: he was in a fairy world; only the slight motion of the water at the entrance reminded him of the heaving sea he had to sail outside. In Gisselfeldt or Bregentved or Glorup or Basnæ, or wherever it was, he was also in a fairy dwelling, sheltered from the world outside, with only newspaper criticism to remind him of its restless billows.

Ancient gables were mirrored in still lakes where swans drifted whitely; vast parks toned into secular forests where beeches wore golden green silk in spring and beaten copper in autumn. There was country life such as he had never known — green oats, yellow wheat, haystacks, clover, and his favourite bird, the Dano-Egyptian stork, promenading with long, thin red legs in the meadows.

Much of the summer of 1842 went in this easy comfortable life with easy comfortable people. Drives, dinners, visits to neighbouring families, a royal visit even, where Queen Caroline Amalie asked him to dance, and Andersen regretfully but wisely declined. He took a duchess in to dinner. His impromptu verses and artful bouquets, his readings and stories, were nicely applauded—even the weather was of the best, almost too warm. Truly this was fairyland, and who was he that he should be in it?

His thoughts strayed back to Odense, to the boy with bare feet in wooden shoes. It was not only the present contrast which made him think back. Early that year his past had risen up with melodramatic effect. He came home one night to find a letter from his half-sister Karen, who had so completely disappeared into the under-world of Copenhagen when he had left for school in Slagelse. In one of his novels he had imagined the horror of having such a family skeleton turn up; now he experienced it. Reality, however, was not so bad. She was living with a decent



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working man; they needed money; he gave what he could and they returned into the obscurity they doubtless much preferred. But his thoughts kept circling restlessly around the problem of why she should have gone under and he gone up—with the emphasis veering towards the latter. His early years stood so clearly before him: how poor, miserable, misunderstood he had been—and now—the overwhelming contrast. These princes and nobles so kind to him, so considerate, to him who had been like one of the poor wild ducks he had seen the other day at the hunt; and who was now like one of the manor swans, stately and petted, regally floating on the dark lake. But a duck could not

become a swan! Certainly not, and he always had been a swan, if they could only have seen it in the days when the grey and clumsy cygnet seemed like an ugly duckling.

What a theme for a fairy-tale! Not a novel, nor a poem, nor a play this time. With sure conviction he at last chose to put the best and most real of himself into the form which he had hitherto considered one of his lesser accomplishments, the tale for children. For Children? Only in the ease and everydayness of its style. It was to have two sides. There was the story, perfectly plain and capable of being read for itself by anyone, even a child; and then there was the meaning, the distilled experience in it—for adults only, and only for adults who had lived and understood.

In the peace of the moat-encircled manor, where he could go and come as he liked, he wrote most of "The Cygnet", the story which was to appear about a year later as that most poignant of his many veiled autobiographies, "The Ugly Duckling".

CHAPTER XVII

IT was pleasant, convenient, and very comfortable to be a manor swan, but after a few weeks perhaps it grew a little restricted. Even a tame bird likes a fling with wild birds of the same feather, and the spring of 1843 found Andersen in Paris being shown the sights and introduced around by no less a person than Alexandre Dumas, the elder. One day they met a young man in the street. "That's my son Alexandre", Dumas said; "when I was eighteen I had him, and now he is eighteen and he hasn't a son yet!" The big hearty quadroon and the thin quivering Dane made an odd couple. Andersen usually fished him out of bed some time after noon, and then they would make visits together to one flashing literary salon after the other, where he met Hugo, Lamartine, Alfred de Vigny, Balzac with his white teeth and red lips, Heine, and many lesser lights. The French, who are all things to themselves, did not of course know anything about Denmark, let alone Andersen, but they knew an artist when they met one, even though he had practically to box his way through their language with whirling arms and sparkling eyes. Dumas took him to see the great actress, Rachel. He was oppressed by the regal purple splendour of her salon, her noble, black-clad beauty, and by the knowledge that her deep voice spoke the most beautiful French in the world. He communicated his timidity, and she veiled it in her graciousness.

"Many foreigners speak to me in perfectly correct French, and I do not understand them. Your French is not good, but I understand you; artists always understand each other."

David, the sculptor, wanted to model him. "But you don't know me, you've read nothing of mine", Andersen objected.

"I have read you before reading your works—you are a real poet", David answered; and that this unanimously expressed opinion was no mere French politeness was proved by the attentive courtesy he met from the serious Lamartine and the stately

Alfred de Vigny. The latter even climbed up to Andersen's fifth-floor room, carrying copies of all his books for him.

The French, in short, gave him perhaps even greater pleasure than if they had "known" him, as the Germans did, whose continued and fervent admiration he harvested on his way both out and back. The French, as only they know how, ministered to the personal. "We like you for yourself", their voices, eyes, gestures seemed to say, and the cordial smile to his face was as sincerely appreciative of his lively warmth as the glance interchanged behind his back was of his obvious naïveté. They too, artists or bourgeois, believed in the aristocratic technique of petting the ego; and, half good-nature, half cynicism, they gave it to him.

They did not, of course, have to live with him nor to pass real judgments on his plays. And at the very time when he was breathing this delicate Parisian incense came a very different whiff from Copenhagen.

Before he left, the romantic play *Agnete*, his child of pain, had been set to music; he had rewritten it a little, and, in his judicious absence, it was now performed at the Royal Theatre.

Poor *Agnete* failed again, to the music of cat-calls, and the news of this roused him to a nearly insane frenzy. Like a primitive mother, he sprang to defend his weakest offspring, his darling imbecile, with passionate fury. "May my eyes never behold the home that only sees my faults. . . . From Denmark come the cold blasts that petrify me . . . they spit on me, they trample me in the mud. And I am a poet such as God gave them few of, but such as I will pray Him in my dying moment never to give again to this people! . . . The Danes can be evil, cold, satanic. . . . People who suit the wet, green-mouldy islands. . . . I hate, I detest my home as it hates and spits on me! . . . I am ill—my home has sent me fever from its wet cold woods which the Danes stare at and think they love!"

Failure plus adverse criticism nearly always produce this kind of indigestion in the artist, but poor Andersen had a glass stomach and his colics were visible to the world. Although this scream at his satanic countrymen was in a private letter, which "must not be shown to strangers", such caution would have been misplaced, for more and more he fell into the habit of an-

nouncing that he was appreciated only abroad. No one at home, he reiterated, understood that praise, praise, infinite praise was the sole way of making him feel humble and produce his best.

Be that as it may, the jeers of the green-mouldy islanders at *Agnete* no doubt had something to do with his turning from the ungrateful stage and pouring his real emotions into more fairy-tales. Now it was conscious. He wrote to Ingemann: "I believe—and I should be happy to be right—that the best thing I can do is to write these tales. The first ones were of course mostly some which I had heard in my childhood and retold, but then I found that those which I created myself, such as 'The Little Mermaid', got the most applause, and that has started me off. Now I dip into my own bosom, find an idea for the older people—and tell it as if to the children, but remembering that father and mother are listening! . . . I have masses of material, more than for any other kind of work; often it seems to me that every fence, every little flower said, 'Just look at me, then you'll know my story!' and if I so desire, the story is mine!"

The story was still, quite literally, often his—his own life. After his return from Paris he had met Riborg Voigt and her husband and spent long enough with her to note with solid satisfaction that the glitter had left that adventure; he hardly knew her. Whereupon he wrote "The Fiancés", the story of the top and the ball, a piece of dizzily spinning mischief.

But this little paean of immunity was written too soon. During summer visits at the manors, his diaries had often exploded into brief wild remarks, pointing to hot yearnings and restless nights; involuntary tributes to the easy life, good food, warm weather, and drives in the pearly northern summer nights next to idle charming women. But Andersen was only thirty-eight, and it was in vain that he proclaimed himself an old bachelor; his whole sensitive impressionable being longed for a natural emotional outlet. But he was a plebeian. But he was poor. But he was ugly. He was always running against those walls.

Then, at Bournonville's, the genial master of the royal ballet and a well of good temper, he met a young woman. She was about twenty-three years of age, but her shy, serious face made her seem more mature. The heavy, downright features even appeared positively ugly, until someone talked to her of music,

art, or religion, when a kind of inner light woke in her, so transfiguring that one wondered how she could ever have seemed other than beautiful; a conviction which was utterly confirmed if she rose and began to sing in a voice of the most warm and silvery purity.

This young woman was Jenny Lind, then on the threshold of her fame. Andersen had met her once before, but casually and hardly seeing her. Now, after their second meeting, he witnessed her first great operatic triumph as Alice in *Robert of Normandy*. That night, at Bournonville's, both her toast and his were drunk in champagne, but he knew already that a headier champagne was intoxicating him.



JENNY LIND

She stayed three weeks, and every day he sent her poems, bouquets, presents. They talked confidentially: she too had come from poor people, had begun her theatre career at the age of ten, had known hardships like himself. And she was ugly! Not when one knew her, of course, but still—how good, how comforting not to have her set unattainably aloft by beauty. Furthermore, she was an artist, but not a rival. Indeed, what more happy combination than a poet and a singer!

He loved. He admitted it, letting the waves of swooning joy overwhelm him. She was leaving for Sweden. The day before he had sent her his picture; at the ship he slipped her a letter—"a letter which she must understand".

But if people were divided into those to whom love is always being offered, and those who are always offering it, poor Andersen belonged irrevocably to the latter. Those letters which must be understood have the great drawback that they often are understood, and that the recipient can then pretend not

to have done so, either by oblique answer or by double-edged silence.

That some such thing happened or did not happen in response to the letter slipped into Jenny's hand was clear a couple of months later, when Andersen sat as guest in a manor where the black trees went down to a grey wintry sea, writing to Edvard Collin that now he had lost all which might have made him jubilantly happy; now there was nothing for which he really longed. Edvard had written with less than his usual reticence, having just lost a child, and Andersen was full of the tenderest gratitude. Let them always be friends, he said; he asked for nothing better. Of late years, he said, he had experienced the emptiness of his dreams, or perhaps he was less of an egoist; at any rate he felt other people occupying him more than himself. The Collins were those, after all, to whom he naturally turned. Never, he sighed, could he be happy as a poet until Edvard's father would say, "I am proud of you", but he supposed this was an impossible dream.

If nothing else rankled, then the friendship and admiration of the Collins for the Heibergs and for Hertz were there to remind him of what he considered a preference for the smoothly artificial. Had not even Jenny suffered the same? Had not many people in high society preferred the jingle of a mediocre Italian opera company to her divinely natural tones?

Melting her and himself together, he wrote, almost at one sitting, the tale of "The Nightingale", in which the live, grey little bird from the woods is far outdistanced in popularity by the ruby and diamond trimmed, gramophone bird—perhaps the most perfect of his stories, blending narrative, humour, beauty, and meaning in a seamless whole; one of art's great allegories, and as simple as bird-song.

In this story there is a little girl who, unlike the Emperor of China's courtiers, does know and feel the difference between the lowing of cows, the croaking of frogs, and the song of the nightingale. Whether in this he was thinking of an actual person or not, the fact is that such a girl really existed in his life and he was just then beginning to appreciate her. She was Jonna Drewsen, Ingeborg Collin's daughter, old Collin's grand-

daughter, Louise's and Edvard's niece, and thus for Andersen an absolutely genuine, enhaloed Collin; a member of the family which he seemed fated to be always wooing. At first, indeed, she was merely one of the several Collin grandchildren to whom he told stories long before he wrote them, but she was even then more raptly attentive than any: listening with that sweetly flattering seriousness which only a child can give. Jonna grew older—smooth brown pigtailed, large dark eyes, pale thin face, and youthful awkwardness; painfully aware that a cousin of hers was more brilliant and more beautiful. To Andersen's startled amazement—a Collin wooing him!—she wrote him reproachful letters because she thought he was showing preference for this cousin.

He might have smiled at the girl—she was only fourteen, tense and inclined to melancholy, not gifted with the easy gaiety of the Collins—but instead he wrote back with wise and loving understanding, untangling her moods as gently as if they had been skeins of the frailest silk. She expressed her gratitude by word and by letter, and they became fast friends, a shade more than friends. She gave him that pure unquestioning love which the adolescent, grateful for being understood, can give to the much older of the other sex, who is not yet too old to feel a thrill of emotion at the exquisiteness of youth and its spontaneous, uncalculating affection. He was used to entertaining the children of his friends and having them grow up into more or less indifference, but Jonna did not change. Here she was now, sixteen years of age, a young lady to whom he ought no longer to use the informal "thou"—twinges of pain when he thought of Edvard—and still she implored him to keep on "as long as you care for me!" "As long as life shall last, then", he answered, and informed her jokingly that the world called her his fiancée.

He could say that safely, for at that very time he was sheltering and furthering her secret romance with a handsome youth, Baron Henrik Stampe, one of Andersen's manor friends. He helped them to meet and to correspond: he brooded over them with passionate tenderness, and never had his letters to her nor hers to him seemed more like love-letters. Indeed he loved her well enough to steer her into the arms of the man it was natural for her to love; but, even while the fiancé was looking over his

shoulder and interpolating remarks, he could not help writing: "Oh, Jonna, I have suffered for your sake, wept, passed sleepless nights; you do not know my struggles; I am fond of you! Do not measure me by ordinary standards; they are not enough!"

Jonna finally got her Henrik, and for Andersen this mignonette of a love affair at second-hand came to an end, but never the friendship between them. Jonna, intelligent, intense, serious, remained his passionate champion, seeing his great weaknesses yet loving him, because she at least never did measure him by the everyday standards of everyday people.

The Andersen whom Jonna knew, the pure soul and great artist who wrote "The Nightingale", was now in the fullness of the tale-creating tide. Lyric, humorous, pathetic, and so light that the misapplied word "fairy" tale might after all be applied to them, they bubbled from his pen. In 1844 came "The Pine Tree" and "The Snow Queen". Winter that year was dazzlingly white and softly thick with snow, and its keen flashing air breathes in them, true to environment as he always was. "The Snow Queen", one of the few things in which he achieved perfection at great length, was Andersen's "Candide", with all the difference between the North, warm and naïve, and the South, chilly and mournfully wise. "I loved writing it", he said; "it forced itself into my mind so fast that it fairly danced on to the paper."

But even with this hint from his own powers, he could not keep from re-attacking the theatre. He concocted another long drama, *The Flower of Fortune*, again almost entirely bad—flat, maudlin, melodramatic. It met with the usual, and just, adversity, and he felt certain that he alone amongst Danish authors was singled out for persecution. To prove it he wrote a little one-act play and submitted it anonymously. It was gratefully accepted, and he was now sure! No persuasion could have made him believe that the little play, being within his capacities, was good, and that the other was not. No, it must be personal prejudice that kept his great works down, letting only the minor ones or anonymous ones into favour.

For this lack of appreciation at home, he knew only one remedy: to seek it abroad, and he took his wounded feelings to

the balmiest place he knew, Germany. Hitherto he had been known chiefly as a novel-writer there, but now his reputation as a *Märchen* writer was beginning to eclipse that. With no great difficulty his many admirers got him to tell his stories in his delightfully baroque German, while children and adults, high and low, listened fervently. It was, however, mostly the high, and this time higher than ever before.

In the course of his journey he arrived at Weimar, to do a little Goethe-worship where the great man had lived. There he met the court chamberlain, Beaulieu, a man of wide culture, who invited him to stay with him. Moreover, he presented him to Carl Alexander, the Hereditary Grand Duke of Weimar, and, as it happened, in a very human way.

Beaulieu and Andersen were driving to the Duke's hunting seat in the forest, when their carriage was stopped by a handsome young man of pleasant speech, who asked, "Have you brought Andersen?" Beaulieu indicated his guest, and the youth greeted him warmly, gazing at him with clear blue guileless eyes, then he swung away on foot again; "I'll see you up there!"

That was Carl Alexander of Weimar, and Andersen felt as genuinely attracted to the simple frank soul that shone in the ducal eyes as he had to the poor Wallachian boy, Adam Marco, whom he met once in a Danubian forest. The attraction between him and the Duke was mutual; from the first moment they were friends, and Andersen joined in both family and court life on as equal terms as his own almost mystic reverence for royalty would let him. The Duchess, who rode her youngsters pick-a-back, was a real princess of Holland!

The letters home flashed with crowns and coronets and "appreciation" and honours, and how he had been told that the King and Queen of Prussia admired him—which no doubt Edvard Collin read with his dry smile, perhaps even then inventing the phrase "Andersen's status-reckoning" for that ever-increasing kind of correspondence.

But if the Weimar visit and Germany in general had led Andersen into this attempt to bludgeon the sceptics at home with foreign monarchs, how much more did he preen and point to his new status when the same year brought him an invitation

from the King and Queen of Denmark to visit them while the court was sojourning at a bathing-place off Slesvig. With persistent remembrance of his own and other people's anniversaries, he did not hide the fact, one day as he sat at the King's table, that this very day twenty-five years ago he had arrived in Copenhagen, poor, friendless, and only fourteen years of age. Christian VIII, still no doubt sweetly forgetting how he had urged that boy to become a cabinet-maker, raised his glass and congratulated him, and so did the Queen. The King did more: that evening he got his whole story from him, and asked sympathetically about his finances; had he enough to live on?

Andersen said he had £40 from the State, and the King exclaimed, "How little!" "But I earn something myself", Andersen said, and even though the King replied, "You ought to be more comfortable", the sensitive artist insisted that he had enough. Whereupon the courtiers spoke to him in sincere disgust: to have thus refused fortune, to have omitted to speak words which the absolute monarch fairly put in his mouth!

That was perhaps one of the great differences between the courtiers and the poet. Andersen could not beg. "If the King wanted to help me, he could do so anyhow", he wrote to Ingemann, and in this his bourgeois friends greatly approved of him. But how trying they found the long accounts of royal meals, picnics, concerts, ducal invitations, strolls on the sands with a prince, and royal graciousness generally! Most of the Danes were anything but pleased with his handsome Majesty, Christian VIII. They had hoped his accession would be the end of absolute monarchy, would bring them a parliament and a constitution. It did nothing of the kind. He gave rings and tie-pins to authors and wished to pass for a patron of the arts, but few took him very seriously in this either.

Except H. C. Andersen. Sharp and bitter as his wit could be when he brought the lesser fry of courts into his tales, fully aware as he was of their shallow snobbery and often vulgar taste, he never mentioned a king without conveying that he believed in the hedge of divinity; even when he wrote with smiling affection of the good old kings in the style of Frederik VI, who wore down-at-heel slippers and personally saw to the pigs.

This was because he needed kings. He had to believe in some-

one above the crowd and above criticism, because only from such semi-divine authority could he be given the honours that the boy in the wooden shoes was for ever craving. How could he prove his social worth to the Collins, to the Wulffs, the Guldbergs? "The King himself toasted me", "The King saw me in the theatre and bowed to me from his box", and so on. The holier the king, the higher and more incontrovertible the honour. Some such feeling, paired with childhood absorption in fairy royalty, was what bated his breath in writing of anyone within the magic circle, were it only a minor relative of an Austrian archduke. His language in letters about them or to them was as naïvely warm and devotedly flowery as that of any vassal to his liege lord in the romantic medieval novels of Ingemann, and one can understand that royalty liked this; it was a pleasant zephyr among the cold democratic winds that still blew from the French Revolution.

But among Andersen's friends there were some for whom it was becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between simple medieval loyalty and simple everyday snobbery, or between an anxious need for status reassurance and a preposterous vanity. In the summer of 1845 people kept coming up to Andersen and saying with suspicious sympathy, "What *have* you done to Hauch that he has treated you so badly in his new novel!" Finding that he had not yet read it, they carefully explained that it was about a poet who was so vain, such an egoist, such a snob, that he eventually went insane and had to be shut up in a madhouse. Andersen laughed and said they were absurd. He knew Hauch; he had at last won his friendship and respect through his novels and tales. Quite recently Hauch had expressed his deep admiration of "The Ugly Duckling"; they were in cordial correspondence; he was certain nothing could be further from Hauch's austere noble nature than thus to pillory a friend. He was angry with the fools who, immediately they read of a crazy egoist of a poet, had to say it was he! He begged Ingemann tell Hauch that he knew better and not to think his feelings hurt.

Then he read the novel, *A Castle by the Rhine*.

In it a young poet, Eginhard, born in a small realm where no one values him, travels down the Rhine, notebook in hand,

on the track of local colour and of compliments. He rushes up and introduces himself to people who have read his work; he reads aloud relentlessly to all and sundry; he never tires of telling of the flattering reception he got from a lady of the very highest rank, a princess who is related to the Imperial House of Austria. He pastes all reviews, even advertisements, into an album. He makes parents bring their children forward so he can tell them stories. He is a physical coward. He weeps whenever he recalls his past sufferings and any criticism that has ever been offered him. He travels in Germany, Sweden, France, and Italy, hunting for appreciation. He cannot decide which branch of art to concentrate on. "I talked yesterday with a lady who said I was best in descriptions of Nature, but now Miss E. says the exact opposite. Some advise me to write comedies, and others again call tragedies and the higher pathos my real vocation. What path ought I to take?" Dr. W. (in words that were almost a quotation from a letter of Hauch's to Andersen) said: 'Everyone should choose the path into which his innermost and best nature forces him, and pay no attention to the confusing noises around.' 'That's easily said!' Eginhard answered while he stared vacillatingly at Dr. W."

The critics at last made a mass attack on Eginhard's carelessness and plagiarisms; declared that he had no ideas of his own and merely shoved his own life into print. Poor Eginhard could not stand this. One day he sees a caricature of himself in a bookshop, in which he pursues the fleeing muse, who will not let herself be caught though he waves a large newspaper at her on which is printed in capitals, Eginhard, Classic Poet! This is too much for his frail wits. While the jeering riff-raff put him in a cart and drag him to the madhouse, he proudly believes that a grateful public is honouring the greatest poet in the world.

When Andersen put down this book, how did he behave: he whom even a mildly unfavourable review could drive into paroxysms of rage and despair and lamentations over the ferocious injustice of which he was the victim?

With quiet dignity he wrote to Ingemann, Hauch's friend and colleague: "Yes, they were right when they said, This is

Andersen! All my weaknesses are here collected! I hope and believe that I am through with this period of my life, but everything said or done by this poet I could have said or done. I felt horror-struck at this crass picture, showing me in my degradation. But I do believe that to do me justice a considerable supplement would be needed which would show some better elements—such as would make me more endurable in real life; I had nearly said less despicable. . . . But I am perfectly convinced that Hauch did not mean the likeness to be as great as it really is . . . he is so noble, so generous. I know he values the good in me. . . . What most has shaken me is the end of the poet . . . my grandfather was insane, my father became so before he died—this touches the deepest chords in my heart. . . . It is unpleasant to be pitied when those who pity one are so overcome by the truth of the description of one's weaknesses. But there is nothing to be done, nothing to be said—I must let this wave pass over me. . . . Remember me most heartily to Hauch!”

Though Ingemann had himself had his doubts of Andersen, he was now deeply moved and wrote him that he was noble in mind and heart, and that the letter showed him in a light so warm and shining, that all shadows which painters of his nature might consciously or unconsciously have put in disappeared in its radiance. He could not say that Hauch had not meant it; but in his charity he found the word unconscious, and he showed the letter to Hauch, who soon wrote to Andersen himself.

Hauch belonged to the nobility, and he took *noblesse oblige* very seriously. It made him utterly disdain any striving for appreciation of his writings, and despise publicity in all its forms. “Art for my sake” he could have said with a much later writer, and it was his firm belief that he wrote only for his own inner satisfaction. With tremendous pride and will-power, he nearly had the artist's vanity in himself chained up, but when he had to hear so much of Andersen's triumphs and honours, the creature slipped away, and spread itself in the novel, looking not unlike spite, though wearing the clothes of noble disdain.

Now when Andersen had so surprisingly risen above *not esse oblige*, Hauch saw himself in the painful dilemma of having either to lie or to apologise; but, as people do in most dilemmas,

he found a way of compromising. He flatly denied that Eginhard was meant as a full-length portrait of Andersen, while he admitted that he had perhaps included a few of his weaknesses, but no more than he had of his own or of some other people's. And he was going to publish a real appreciation of the fairy-tales.

Andersen was only too glad resolutely to shut an eye and to take the outstretched hand. Having decided that Hauch was his friend, he would let nothing or no one stand in the way of that friendship, not even Hauch himself. If he were given the slightest foothold on the ladder of reconciliation, he would climb to the top at once.

Nevertheless, only a man who was in good spiritual health at the time could have so taken and recovered from a public attack on his tenderest weaknesses. A great part of the reason for this health was that he had, not exactly conquered his weaknesses, but that he had admitted them. Well before the appearance of the unfortunate novel about poor Eginhard, Andersen had amazed a circle of friends by calmly reading aloud to them a keen and cruel estimate of all his works, in which originality was denied him and only an embroidering, unthinking imagination granted.

"Andersen is a poet whose nature illustrates what a difference there is between having invention and having a rich imagination. No one can deny him the latter; he knows how to group and adorn his thoughts and emotions, but he lacks creative invention. His friends may think this a harsh and unfair thing to say, since he has given us three long novels that certainly seem unique, indeed not comparable to anything else we know, but if we look a little closer we see that they are but poetic versions of real experiences divided into three books. Andersen is an improviser; he expresses his own emotions, adapted to his theme; he blends his own life and the people he knows with his voyage in Italy, and the result is the novel *The Improvisator*. In *O. T.* and in *Only a Fiddler*, he has played the same trick with himself and his own experiences, and since he was oppressed by having a stock of impressions from Germany and France, he had to place some chapters of the last novel in those countries.

"In the three novels we have a piece of scroll-work, crowded

and inartistically intertwining, where instinct indeed has led him to write some beautiful detail, but if we gaze at it calmly and reasonably we see, as said before, that he is unable to create, he can only group and divide his own experience. There is no invention, only imagination. Reason is his weak point. The chimes and fragrance of the South twine about the masque of Carnival, there is radiance from the Blue Grotto and flames from Vesuvius, the whole is a luxuriant southern vine; but blond northern heads peep out, and the hero himself, the improvisator, who is he but our own improvisator, our good-natured, vain, childlike Andersen, who certainly cannot be denied a fair amount of talent."

After dismissing the other two novels as more of the same thing, as well as the poems and plays, the critic went on to say that although the fairy-tales were the only really poetic performances by this author, yet they too were overloaded scroll-work, the styles too mixed in them, satire and naïveté, the baroque and the humorous, and not the closest scrutiny could reveal any moral lesson in them. "We cannot but wish this poet, for the name has to be granted him, a clearer insight into himself and the world around him. He has the poet's eye, but not his searching gaze. Knowledge must ballast the ship, and reason must steer. . . ."

The good Professor Ørsted, who was listening, murmured, "Unjust, quite unjust—and yet—there are *some* things which do seem true, yes, one must admit——"

"I wrote it myself!" Andersen laughed.



CHAPTER XVIII

H^E could afford to criticise himself now. During a visit to Berlin he wrote to Edvard's wife, "I am killed, I can't stand it, I am being lionised, a Berlin lion, a male Jenny Lind, I am the vogue!" From the heights of Berlin society, the Danish manors, once so grand, now seemed more like simple, cosy refuges. Life there could even be monotonous. Staying at Glorup, he found the two hours after dinner rather long. "The Count and the two old ladies are dear old people, but they haven't much to say. I have to talk for two hours. Then he can get talked out, I hear Ingeborg say. Yes, I get more than talked out; there are long pauses, and during them, strange to hear, come queer rumbling sounds from the stomach of one of the old ladies: this is my only amusement."

As Andersen journeyed south again that winter of 1845-46, all the Collins got many letters, letters more than ever scintillant with the admiration, attention, affection, and honours that he got in Germany. Dinner with the King of Prussia. The queen so gracious. The fairy-tales all over Berlin. "I really believe they will be of some magnitude in our literature." Humboldt prophesied universal fame for him. "How I wish I could fall on your neck and say: You will have to be proud of me! I nearly cry, I can't believe it . . . dearest, dearest Edvard, if I could hug God, I'd do it, so grateful am I!"

Old Collin was attacked directly. "My greatest vanity, or rather call it pleasure, is in your realising that I am worthy of you. I really am beloved, appreciated. Abroad, I am—famous; I see you smile at this. But the foremost men crowd to meet me, I am received everywhere, princes and men of talent pay me the greatest compliments . . . Oh, how few of those at home who disdain me would believe this, of those even who would be happy by a drop of the acclaim that is mine. Heiberg is translated now, but no one mentions him. . . . I must tell you this, you, my beloved Father, must understand that you made no mistake. . . ."

Edvard remarked in return that even if his "education" of Andersen had been harsh, the results, by his own account, were wonderful. He continued to attend to his friend's business affairs, but he did not send any bouquets. Neither did his father; he had given a far greater proof of his love for his queer ward the year before. When his wife died, Andersen was the only stranger who was sent for to be present at the death-bed.

On the whole the Collins did not quite believe in all this fame; they knew his powerful imagination, and if it was not one of them who said, "I wonder what those people are stuffing him with", they probably thought it.

But hard as it was for them, and for his many jealous little colleagues, to believe, still it was true.

Jenny Lind, who was in Berlin at the same time, did not invite Andersen to share her Christmas because as she smilingly excused herself, "I thought you were with Princes and Princesses". To make up for this, she was at home to him alone on New Year's Eve, 1845. There was a little garlanded Christmas tree. She sang for him and he read aloud to her. It had a hopeful air, but though they sat in the same sofa, she kept the impassable distance between them which she had created that autumn in Copenhagen when she publicly toasted him as her "Brother"; and she ever afterwards so referred to him. He told her eagerly about all the "appreciation", about the ring from the Duke of Oldenburg, the blue velvet album from the Prussian Princess, and glory of glory, his first decoration—the Red Eagle of the Third Class, bestowed on him by the King of Prussia. She passed her hand over his hair and murmured "child—child", but not because she had any doubt as to the truth of his story.

Soon afterwards she saw him in Weimar, as the guest of Duke Carl Alexander. He went to state dinners in court costume, including three-cornered hat and gilt rapier by his side. The Duke and he sat in the sofa, holding hands and vowing eternal friendship. Sometimes they wept and embraced out of pure exalted emotion; in Germany it was quite the thing to express one's feelings that way, and Hans Christian had always wanted to; a trait in him that turned most Danes into bristling icebergs, if they saw it emerging. But Germany was warmly different. Here

even publishers and booksellers were suing for his favour. Actually, for the first time, they were offering him money for his books; asking for his autobiography to print with a collected edition, and promising royalties for future work. He thought this marvellous, but he was almost as pleased to hear that pirated editions were circulating in America. This was fame!

Oh, it was all true, and he kept the Collins informed. "Almost I believe that now is the culmination of my happiness: it seems to me I have obtained everything in this world."

But either the Collins did not write, or else they wrote with a sort of dry, affectionate pity—poor fellow, to be roving the world so much—and the house of his happiness fell down like cards. What was the use! To the royalty of Prussia and Weimar and Oldenburg, he was soon able to add Saxony and Imperial Austria. He read his tales aloud at the tea-table of a Dowager Empress. Hosts of princes and princesses heard about "The Swineherd", "The Nightingale", "The Snow Queen", but when he threw himself on the letters from home, he found old Collin writing that this was really an empty life he was now leading, not good for the soul.

Desperate he poured out his heart to Edvard—how like a fairy-tale it was, how thrilling, how marvellous, but he could not enjoy it as he ought to, unless the Father felt honoured in his honour. "But he does not know it, he does not see it that way. Even to my dearest at home I am only Andersen, a decent fellow who has got talent, but who thinks a fearful lot of himself, and Denmark has far greater men. . . . I feel as though I had tried to fall on someone's neck and he turned away. . . . I know I have no better friend in Denmark than your father, but that is just it, my dear friend, Denmark for me is the Collin family. Alas, they do not know that I do my country honour, or else they set no store by it. How can I now open my heart, when I have the feeling that my happiness is called empty and my recognition is set at nought!"

Edvard frowned and smiled and wrote from temperate Denmark that it was all very well for the Germans to be kissing and crushing him, but here we disliked men to be kissing each other and melting with emotion. Andersen's friends were happy, however, to learn that he was a success and was making new

friends, who, for the present, might be supposed to be real. Of course he, Edvard, could see the difference between being hugged by the Weimar court and drinking coffee with the Collins, where Ingeborg teased him and Theodor tickled him and called him "*pauvre pomme de terre*", a poor potato; as he could see how Andersen's unique imagination might magnify this difference into a tale of being despised and rejected in Denmark. But the truth was that he and Denmark would get along splendidly were it not for the unfortunate theatre. His fairy-tales were as much beloved at home as in Germany, and probably more.

Andersen, in spite of his threats, continued of

EDVARD COLLIN

course to keep open heart. Soon he was informing Edvard that when he arrived in Rome for the Easter celebrations, there were only three names mentioned in the newspapers, among all the thousands of visitors, and one of them was H. C. Andersen's! "I—I, your insignificant friend, whom you were once too grand to say 'thou' to! But when I get to be a state councillor and have a son, he shall refuse to say thou to your Jonas, if you are still only a Councillor of Justice! This is nonsense, but there must be some nonsense in a good letter!"

From Rome, which he found charming this time, Andersen went to Naples. Naples was too hot, it nearly killed him, and he gave up his cherished idea of going to Spain. Instead he went to the French Pyrenees, but France too was sweltering in a sticky summer, and he fled North, hardly able to draw a comfortable breath till he found himself again in Weimar with

Duke Carl Alexander; strangers saluting him in the streets, linden fragrance and ecstatic friendship.

There was a letter from the wicked Edvard, showing that he had been very busy getting whatever money he could from Andersen's various little playlets—he had two good anonymous ones running now—and the Duke of Oldenburg's ring. Travel needs money, and where was it to come from? Edvard did the best he could, and that was a good deal. Besides this, he was copying out the autobiography for the German edition which Andersen had sent him to correct; the writing was illegible to all but himself, and he wrote a fine official hand.

Edvard Collin at this time had nearly as much work to attend to for his country as his father, and a wild remorse struck Andersen. "I must press you to my heart. I may do it at this distance; it is only in reality you don't like it. You are good, blessings on you. You are a Friend! How you have touched me, made me ashamed . . .!"

He could not help adding that the Duke had given him a suite of rooms in gorgeous rococo, and a private lackey who called him Gracious Lord; and that the Duke talked till late with him every night. But he communicated too that he was not really happy—there was something lacking, an ever-present unrest, a yearning, perhaps it was for his real friends, and yet they refused to appreciate him. "Alas, why is it that I can never really enjoy the present!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE London season of 1847 was extremely hot, and even though the very best people crowded Lady Palmerston's reception one evening in June, they made the temperature no cooler. When the heat and crush and elegant buzz were at their height, a tall, thin, less elegant man staggered out into a corridor and leaned against a stair-rail, trying to catch his breath and his balance. This was Andersen, overcome by his debut in English "high life", as he called it.

He had long been wanting to add Holland and England to his conquests, and since his novels and tales had now been circulating for some time in both countries he had ventured thither. Holland had been as full of solid admiration as an Edam cheese is full of nourishment. He had been passed from one worshipping family to another. In The Hague a veritable apotheosis had been given him by an assembly of writers and artists. Collin's health had been drunk as the man who saved H. C. Andersen. Nothing could have been more satisfactory—nothing, that is, except England. He had gone there without even one letter of introduction; he who was usually so cautiously fortified by them. The smoky tangle of shipping on the Thames struck him first, and then the unending waves of traffic in London. Never had he seen such life, such stir, so many advertisements, such hordes of known and unknown vehicles, all hurrying as though importantly bound for the other end of London. Weary and buffeted by the noise, he went to a little hotel in Leicester Square, which Professor Ørsted had recommended: where he fell asleep, not without surprise that setting sun and stars were visible even in London. Next day he called on the Danish ambassador, who said, "You need no letters of introduction", and got him an invitation to the Palmerstons for that very evening, and here he was.

Never were such polished floors. Never were such roses as flowed over windows, tables, stairs, and niches. By great luck

his dear Duke and Duchess of Weimar were there to welcome him. The Duchess of Suffolk had just spoken to him so kindly of *The Improvisator*, and with the Duke of Cambridge he had chatted of the Danish royal family. Ladies in the richest attire he had ever beheld: walking heaps of satin, laces, gold, diamonds, and huge bouquets, had besieged him to talk of "The Ugly Duckling", "The Red Shoes", and all the other little tales which he had once labelled "for children" and considered a by-product. All invited him to dinners, lunches, balls, receptions, and the Danish ambassador whispered that he had done in one leap what many took years to achieve. Now they would quietly sort out the cards and pick and choose.

Andersen held his head and leaned against the stair-rail. Just before he left Denmark he had been in Odense. In the street he had seen a poor boy, a boy with fine features and shining eyes, but a semi-idiot, jeered at and chased by the others. He had shuddered. His grandfather had been so all his life, his father had finished so, and he—? There was still the chestnut tree by the cathedral up into whose branches he had swung to escape the shrill pursuers.

And now Count Reventlow talked of picking and choosing for him among high life nobility. Reventlow had warned him at once not to mention the hotel in Leicester Square, but to say he was staying at the Embassy. It was an impossible address, not the fashion at all. Andersen obeyed, wondering at the country of liberty where fashion was absolute; and which was so enchained in etiquette that even the Queen, wanting to linger in her park, had to go home for eight o'clock dinner, or England would have disapproved.

He was flat and weary after three weeks of London season and summer heat, but happily there were a few breathing spaces from society. One was Jenny Lind. She too was in London; indeed a paper had enthusiastically compared her and him, and he had the usual dear, brotherly, dry-biscuit visit with her in the little house she had taken in Old Brompton, as a rustic retreat. There was always a cluster of people outside it, hoping for a glimpse. But Jenny avoided the fatigue of society by the simple means of resolutely refusing it, no matter what temptations were offered. Her "brother" was not so

steadfast. Sweat and groan as he might, he could not bear to refuse an invitation; but he knew the difference between high



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life and real life, and no scandalised reproofs of genteel ladies kept him from telling them that the visits he enjoyed most were those he had made to Lady Blessington.

Lady Blessington, once the girl from County Tipperary, was now a rather corpulent woman whose hands sparkled with rings. No ladies came to Gore House, since Count d'Orsay, her stepdaughter's husband, preferred to live with his step-mother-in-law; but Lady Blessington probably bore up under the deprivation, since her parties were attended by every brilliant and interesting man.

The editor of the *Literary Gazette* brought Andersen to Gore House. Lady Blessington greeted him as an old friend, and found just the right and sincere words to say about his work. He forgot the bewigged and liveried footmen; forgot her satiny splendour and starry rings; saw only the face that radiated charm. She walked with him in the garden among the roses and weeping willows; and she was the first English-woman, he said, whose speech he was honestly able to understand. Her method no doubt had a lot to do with it. She grasped him firmly by the wrist, gazed straight into his eyes after each word and asked if he understood, spoke very slowly—and, anyhow, she was Irish. Her rooms were full of pictures of Napoleon, and her study of books on Anne Boleyn.

But the best was yet to come: she had promised that he should meet Charles Dickens. Dickens had written that he would come to London on purpose: "I must see Andersen".

Andersen was just writing a few words in Lady Blessington's copy of *The True Story of My Life*, when a man came in whose good, handsome, youthful face and fine wavy hair he recognised from pictures. They ran towards each other, each held out both hands, they gazed, they laughed, the inevitable tears came to Andersen's eyes, and Dickens pulled him outside to the verandah. He understood him, even his English, or perhaps in spite of it, since at one moment he murmured, "Try Danish", but the language-crossing sympathy was there, and he invited him home.

The Dickens family were at Broadstairs, but before Andersen visited them he went to Scotland, which for him as for so many of his time was one thing only: Walter Scott's country. Young Hans Christian, in the windowless room of the queer street in Copenhagen, had lain awake many nights, devouring Scott's novels; happy to spend his pennies at the loan library for them

rather than for dinner. Now Hambro, an Anglo-Danish banker, was his host in Scotland, and his stay there was as triumphant as in England. Circumstances made him miss an audience with the Queen and Prince Albert, but he found himself nearly as well known as Walter Scott himself. He was recognised by high and low; he was absolutely, indubitably, completely famous. A walking-stick which he had lost at Loch Lomond was handed to him in Edinburgh, just as he was boarding the London train, all its address being a little label with the words: "The Danish Poet, Hans Christian Andersen".

An idyllic visit with Dickens and his family finished this Britannic tour, and the homeward trip began. Happily? Not even in London had he been happy. The Danish newspapers had ignored the glowing articles about him in the Dutch and English press. He practically blamed Edvard. At least he told him again that this time he really was famous, and sent him an English paper with his picture and the words, "One of the most remarkable and interesting men of this day". He once more dug up the very shallowly buried bone of the "thou" difference. He even informed poor Edvard that this was the point of his fairy-tale "The Shadow", a satire so biting and clever, on popular preference for the unreal, that Edvard might well have taken offence, but he did not. This was not entirely good nature on Edvard's part. He interpreted "The Shadow" as poor Andersen's jealousy of himself, because he, Edvard, was able to write family songs that were more popular at the many Collin anniversaries than those by Andersen. Satisfied with that interpretation, Edvard shrugged his shoulders and went to various Danish editors with the foreign newspapers to see what he could do; much as he disapproved of publicity. He got the response he expected, that really they could not make themselves ridiculous by printing such extravagances about Andersen. Their readers might even think they were trying to make fun of him.

All of which did seem to give some point to Andersen's feeling that he was still the ugly duckling in his own country; a feeling that was given cruel rancour when he arrived back in Copenhagen, and, standing at his window, saw a couple of

well-dressed men smile and point to him while one of them said, "Look, there is our orang-outang, who is so famous abroad!"

It was of no use that Edvard laboured with him and argued that a writer in his own country may have deep and general recognition, but it is quiet; whereas he is a rarity in foreign countries and can be used to decorate society, especially on short visits—the orang-outang remark hurt Andersen almost more than the foreign ovations had helped him. He was not proud enough to discount it as a splash from the gutter of envy; the cad's natural hatred of success unawarded by him or his kind.

Yet this mud might have been forgotten, if the book which he soon published had been a success; but it was not, nor should it have been. In the dramatic poem "Ahasuerus" he had again tried to be epic, to do something more orthodoxly worthy of fame than he even still suspected the tales to be. Begun years ago in Rome, it had at last been dragged to a finish. Based on the meagre idea that the Wandering Jew represented the spirit of doubt through the centuries, it was a watery gruel of sickly optimism and schoolboy philosophy. Denmark once more had the thankless task of saving Andersen for the fairy-tales and from himself.

CHAPTER XX

WITHIN the next three years even Copenhagen was to get other things to live for than literary and theatre gossip. The snug, self-important little world that had purred and cackled under the absolute monarchy, like the old woman's cat and hen in "The Ugly Duckling", was to be shaken by the revolutionary storm from France and the martial storm from Prussia. Frederik VI had announced to those of his subjects who volunteered to help him govern that "We alone know what is for the good of the State", and Christian VIII had taken more or less of the same position. But in January of 1848 Christian VIII died, and in February the French again sent red shocks through the world, electrifying even the sedate Danes to the point where the liberal leaders demanded sombrely not to be driven to "the self-help of despair" in order to get a Constitution.

It looked as though loyal and peace-loving citizens like H. C. Andersen would be forced to take notice of that horrid thing called "Politics", at which all decent people had been lifting their eyebrows and avoiding as a topic for some time. "Politics for me has always been a cloud on the far horizon, now its cold fog penetrates all our limbs", Andersen said, and nothing would be easier than to condemn him for his lack of interest in the social and political movements of his day. He not only was not interested; he shunned them as nervously as a cat does water. A German radical poet, meeting him in London, had said to him, and only half in jest, "You wouldn't speak to me, you King-lover!" But that was not the whole truth. If Andersen "had no politics", which nearly always means a penchant for the conservative, it was more a sort of protective colouring; the instinctive fear felt by the weak of "trouble", as well as his naïve acceptance of the divine in royalty. His heart was equalitarian, in the best sense. The man who wrote "The Little Match-Girl", "Everything in its Right Place", and "She was Worth Nothing" and many other tales in which the poor and

rejected are wrapped in the richest mantle of understanding sympathy, of fellow-suffering, did more perhaps to make Denmark the most democratic and kindly nation in the world than any of the radical fighters, brave, devoted, and necessary though they were. "Why do you need so many subjects in the schools", Tagore said once on a visit to Denmark, "when you only need one: Andersen?"

But when it came to dictating to kings how they ought to deal with their subjects—well, the King of Sweden had just sent him the Order of the North Star, and the Duke of Weimar had bestowed on him the Order of the White Falcon. He felt uncomfortable when the excited Copenhagen masses marched to the palace to demand a Constitution of the new King, Frederik VII; a man who, wise in his day, greeted the deputation with a smile and the words, "Delighted that our points of view are so perfectly in accord: the thing you wish for was done this morning. . . ."

But there was worse to come, much much worse. Along with the orders of the North Star and the White Falcon, Andersen had of course his first order, the Red Eagle (third class) given him by the dear good King of Prussia—or, as Fru Heiberg privately called him, "that fat, very fat, fierily red-faced man with the glassy sleepy eyes".

Now the dear good King of Prussia was attacking Denmark, called in by the rebellious Holsteiners. The far cloud on the horizon which the question of the Duchies had long been had indeed become a present fog of deadly coldness.

Among the many submarine reefs of the past, the Slesvig-Holstein question was the most formidable. It was a jagged mass of dynastic inheritance problems and rival nationalisms. The King of Denmark was also Duke of Slesvig-Holstein, and when Holstein wished to enter the German Confederation Frederik VI was quite willing that it should. But Holstein, which was German, had got the idea that Northern Slesvig, which was pure Danish, must be for ever governmentally connected with it; a theory which was denied by the whole Danish people as well as by the Danish kings.

Hence 1848, '49, '50, with an interval of a half-year's armistice, saw Denmark fighting off the Prussian attack. The help

they had fondly hoped for from England, Queen Victoria would not give them, though Disraeli wanted to. Swedish and Norwegian volunteers came to their aid, exalted by the beginning of Scandinavian unity; but on the whole the Danes had to fight alone. This they did bravely, though it was unfortunately with the wrong-headed contentions that since they had a legal right to Holstein as well as to Slesvig they meant to retain both. It was war, real war, not the ornamental parades of which Frederik VI had been so proud, and it very soon generated the all-or-nothing war mentality.

As usual it was in the middle classes that this war mood developed most drastically. Dregs were stirred even in so mild and pure a soul as Ingemann's. He wrote fervently to Andersen of wanting the war fought to the bitter end both on land and sea, and of "killing all the Germans like flies in September". He besought his friend to send back "the blood-stained Eagle" given him by the King of Prussia, and reproached him for being able to write peacefully on a novel in the midst of "a conflict which is tensing all nerves, and sharpening all thoughts into spears and bayonets".

Less noble natures than Ingemann's openly hinted that if Andersen did not join the patriotic haters, it was because he had been made so much of in Germany. Copenhagen became insupportable to him. He took refuge among his friends in the manor-houses, and in the writing of the novel *The Two Baronesses*. Except in spots, it was not a very good novel, but the conditions under which it was written affected him far more than the fire-eaters would believe. The idea of war, even of war in foreign and distant countries, had always made him shudder, and the violence unchained in and against his own country made him physically ill. But hate the Germans? His thoughts were not material for spears and bayonets, and certainly not against all Germans. He knew too many of them to condemn a whole people. He thought them grievously wrong in what they were doing to Denmark; he did his best to bring the Danish cause to English attention, but he never joined in any hymn of hate; hard as it was for him to feel himself unpopular. His heart expanded almost painfully in sympathy with the heroism, unity,

and the patient suffering which he saw around him, and at last his feelings brimmed over into the most beautiful song written for Denmark. But except for the words, "God send the best victory", there was no word of war in it, there was only a wave of love for the clear, fragrant beauty of his home—the sea, the clover fields, the beech forests, its great memories, peaceful accomplishments, and the hope that it might be granted a future as well as a past.

In its tender, strong simplicity, this song was utterly Danish, and so was Hans Christian Andersen, and now he knew it. When even his darling Jonna wrote him a letter in which she hinted that he had not been so intensely moved by seeing the soldiers in Copenhagen as the rest of them were, he responded that he knew what she meant. "I am not Danish enough for you, not according to your standards . . . strange that all Europe says I am so genuinely Danish, so national that I am difficult to translate . . . I am not fierily Danish enough for you, my dear Jonna, it is probably because I am so 'just' towards all, but might not this 'justice' be the very flower of what I call genuinely Danish and of most value in my nation, namely, honesty?"

Andersen was abnormally sensitive and loving; his constant complaint was that if people would only care for and try to understand each other, there would be none of all this trouble and sorrow; still that "justice" which he called the flower of honesty, he quite rightly felt that he shared with the Danish people, but it was with the common Danish people, of whom he was one. They fought because they had to, but they had not been steeped in the narrow patriotism which was still part of middle-class education, and perhaps, too, they knew enough about hunger and hardship to realise that "the **enemy**" was made up of common suffering people like themselves.

During those years, Andersen had not the heart to go abroad, but his friend Frederika Bremer, the Swedish writer, persuaded him to make a long journey through Sweden. That most romantic of the northern countries, he saw as few before him had seen it—the grim strength of iron and copper works, the solemn darkness of pines, the trembling white beauty of birches, the thousand crystal ways of water with rocks and meadows, the

tall fair peasants in costumes of lacquer red, vibrant blue, grass greens, and burning yellows. From the King's table to the humblest parsonage he met courtesy and hospitality, but one tribute touched him more deeply than any. He was asleep in a little inn a couple of miles from Motala, when he was awakened early by song. He looked out; a number of people were standing in the rain and singing, while they gazed towards his window. He called the maid to ask who and why—they were the workers from a Motala factory; they had trudged there in the rain to honour him.

Next to this, perhaps, an incident pleased him, in which he was not Andersen at all, not the tenderly loved author with whom the poor and the simple of heart were always right, but a stranger who could do amazing things with a pair of scissors. One of the things that long ago had made his mother determined to make him a tailor was the queer deftness of his huge hands; and in the Copenhagen families where he ate his free dinners he had often delighted the children by cutting dancers and swans and castles and fantastic figures out of paper as rapidly as he talked.

On Midsummer Day veering towards evening, which is not evening in the far North, he sat in a country inn by the clear brightness of Lake Siljan, when the little grand-daughter of his hostess tripped in, eager to have a look at his coloured carpet-bag, Scotch plaid, and the red lining in his small trunk. Quickly he seized a sheet of paper and cut out a whole Turkish mosque, minarets and



SHROUFFTE BY H. C. ANDERSEN

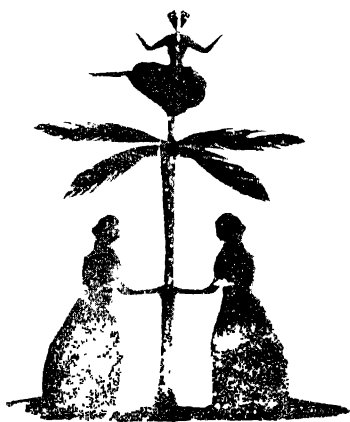
windows, and she rushed happily out with it. Soon he heard excited voices in the yard, sneaked a look—a crowd of men

and women stood around the grandmother who, with shining face, lifted the mosque high, out of reach of the child, who shrieked and strove to get back her lawful property. A few minutes later, the grandmother came to Andersen's room with a whole plateful of gingerbread in various shapes.

"I bake the best gingerbread in Dalarne," she said, "but the shapes are old, from my grandmother's time. The gentleman cuts out such beautiful things, might he not be able to cut us some new shapes?"

Bewitched by her pleading and by the polite Swedish use of the third person, Andersen sat nearly all that opal midsummer night and cut out shapes for gingerbread: nutcrackers with long boots, windmills that included the miller, men in slippers with a door in the stomach, dancers who pointed a leg skywards. The

grandmother got them, but she turned the dancers upside down; she thought they were one-legged and three-armed. "New shapes they will be," she said as she thanked him in her soft chanting accents, "but difficult!"



SILHOUETTE BY H. C. ANDERSEN

But this escape into beauty and peace came to an end, and he had to return to war-stricken Denmark. Ochlen-schlaeger died, the great poet and good friend, the man who, seeing his distress at being placed lower than Hertz or Heiberg, had put fatherly arms around him,

placed a genuine kiss on his lips and said: "They are clever people, very gifted people, but you are a real poet, and it is I who say so, and I know!" Thorvaldsen too was gone, his other kindly protector from the Golden Age; he was himself one of the seniors now. Ørsted died, the great scientist, a shy, clear, generous soul who had tactfully tried to bring the order of

reason into the poet's soul. A depression, both spiritual and physical, began to haunt him. What had he achieved, after all? And had he not reached and passed the summit? "I no longer believe in my future", he wrote; "I see nothing to strive for, nothing great or splendid to reach—there is the gnawing worm!" This was partly because a new play of his for a new popular theatre had been parodied, but it was also a real doubt. "If one's achievement were that of a Galilei, one might endure condemnation with celestial confidence."

His physical unease took the odd nervous forms to which his friends were beginning to be accustomed; fears and worries about trifles; the latest was rheumatism in the nose!

Yet peace had come, and at the first news of it he had run out into the spring-fresh beech forest at Glorup, singing German and Danish songs at the top of his voice. To be sure it turned out to be not quite peace; there were cruel battles after it, in one of which his old and still cherished friend Signe Læssø lost her favourite son, but eventually peace did come, and on the basis of a Danish victory. A deceptive basis—fear the Gods bringing victory! English and Russian diplomats tried in vain to persuade Denmark to be content with Slesvig and to let Holstein go, but so blinding is victory that they could see neither the wisdom of this nor the seeds of future war.

CHAPTER XXI

ABSOLUTE political monarchy had gone, and the absolute monarchy of the Royal Theatre had also gone. There was a rival theatre now, started by the far-sighted man who laid out the Tivoli pleasure garden. Regular authors did not as yet condescend to write for the Casino, the new "popular" theatre, but Hans Christian Andersen did; and he was gratefully received. The three fairy-tale plays which he wrote for them sparkled with much of his best baroque humour in lines and situations, though his plots had got no stronger, and the demands he made on the producer nearly turned the latter's hair grey. But the Casino was not the haughty "Royal"; Lange, the producer, desired to keep his playwright, and in this autumn of 1851 the government had given Andersen the quaint honorary title of Professor, so that he was now a man to be cajoled rather than bullied.

When he came with his play about the *Old Woman in the Elderberry Tree*, Lange mildly objected: "How are we going to have a tree, large enough for the lady to sit in the branches, standing in a barber's shop?"

"We must change that," Andersen admitted, "we must move it into the garden."—"But then it can't be seen."—"Oh yes, through the window."—"How large a window, Professor Andersen?"—"Oh, an ordinary window; you can see a large tree through a little window!"—"Yes, close by, but not from far out in the audience."—"We must make the tree smaller then!"—"But how about the lady?"—"Well, make her smaller, let a little girl play her."—"But such a tiny girl out in a tree back of the stage couldn't talk loud enough."—"How terrible!" Andersen sighed, now a trifle wounded and suspicious.

There was no pity in the producer. "That is not the worst. How do you think, Professor, that the branches of the elderberry tree can bend down and lift up Peter and Marie from below the floor of the barber's shop when they themselves have to be out in the garden?"—"How could I possibly know that!"

Andersen was near being caught in tears. "The tree will *have* to be in the barber's shop!"

Lange saw the hand reaching for the manuscript; sensed a door-ward movement. Hastily he said, "The tree *can't* get into the barber's shop, dear Professor, but—we can move the whole scene into the garden and have the tree right in front of us. We simply move the shop into the wings; we can't use it."

"But why not?" Andersen asked, anxious for his cherished chorus-of-people-about-to-be-shaved; "don't we come into the barber's shop at all?"

"No!" said Lange with perfect conviction, "it's being repaired—ceiling whitewashed, walls papered, floors relaid—the customers will *have* to excuse the chairs being moved into the garden and being shaved there."

"But that's *lovely*!" Andersen exclaimed. and all was well. He even made money on these plays, as much as £20 for one of them. His book on Sweden had been successful. His State pension had been raised some time ago from £40 to £60, and some of his foreign publishers were actually paying him little sums. He felt so well off that it seemed to him selfish not to do something for somebody.

What he loved best in the world was to travel, and especially now when there were such romantic means of progress as railway trains. He had to travel. He could no more stay shut up in little Denmark than he could keep to his room even when he was ill. "It makes me sick to be shut in; I hate even the end of the seats in the theatre being closed." Now peace had opened Germany to him again. All through the war his books had been published and republished there. With spider-like tact and patience, though always maintaining his self-respect as a Dane, he had re-spun the threads that knit him to German friends, and he was ready for a full burst of travel. But he wanted to share it with someone, and with whom better than with one of the young Collins? They were no better off than the children of underpaid civil servants usually are.

Collin's grandchildren had always been his favourites. In those days people used to make their own fun instead of buying it, and Christmas really began weeks ahead with the home-manufacture of decorations for the tree. Andersen's table was

littered with gilt and coloured papers out of which his scissors snipped presents for all those of his friends who had children, but mostly for the Collins. No matter how slim his resources were, he never forgot a birthday. But now the children were growing up and dancers on tiptoe failed to charm, those in gilt paper, anyhow. He invited Ingeborg Collin Drewsen's son, Viggo, to travel with him in Germany, Switzerland, Northern Italy. Like two youngsters they pelted each other with snow on the St. Gothard; but it did Collin's grandson no harm to see Andersen accepted as a dear friend at the Weimar court; or at the court of Bavaria, where the young aesthetic King Max made much of the Danish poet. He and the King sailed on a quiet lake, the Alps were blue and rose, Andersen read aloud from his stories. It was romantic, and so it was when he came home and the Dowager Queen invited him to stay a few days in her palace; in the very rooms which had belonged to the Director of the Royal Theatre, who had once brusquely informed him he was too thin and gauche to make an actor.

How it sent him back to the early days! More and more he found himself living in those contrasts, especially since he was beginning to write an autobiography to accompany the first edition of his collected works in Danish. He wanted it to appear on his fiftieth birthday.

It did appear. Since he saw his first performance at the Royal Theatre, cried over Paul and Virginia, and told the kind women who gave him sandwiches the story of his fourteen years, he had told and written the ever-increasing story many times, best of all in the fairy-tales, but that was not enough. He yearned to dispense justice to all **who had** helped him and charity to all who had not; and this **task, which** he had begun in the autobiography attached to the **German** edition, he now enlarged and completed in the Danish version. The beginning was quaint and pathetic, calm and clear, with the serene lines of distance; later on the book swelled to a chaos of names and "status-reckoning", but from the whole a definite figure emerged. It was that of a poor boy, almost but not quite inexcusably naive, yet succeeding through great miseries by his inborn gifts and the help of God. On a childhood in rose followed a youth in grey, then a somewhat grey and rose mottled man-

hood, then the final triumph of the colour of joy and gratitude. He called it *My Life's Fairy-tale*, and, except for "married the princess and lived happily, et cetera", it followed the fairy-tale curve very closely. If he had not a princess for his own, he had whole royal families who adored and adorned him. "Out of evil came good, out of pain came joy. . . . Frank and trustful, as if I were sitting with my best friends, I have now told the tale of my life."

In one of his own novels, Andersen described a character who was accused by crude people of being a liar: to which he replied that he was not, but that he would admit to the practice of sometimes "grouping" facts. Now, in grouping facts, it often becomes necessary to leave some out and to shove others forward more than their importance warrants, especially if one has decided beforehand on the meaning of the arrangement. This is what happened in *My Life's Fairy-tale*, a title by the way which might serve as a general synonym for "autobiography". Andersen's "grouping" was mainly to the effect that while everybody had always been kind to him (he mentioned their names) with only a few exceptions whom he forgave (also by name), yet there was a tribe which had always been incomprehensibly against him—the critics. Sometimes he did not say "critics", he said "Denmark". In looking back on his life from the eminence of fifty years, which then counted as at least sixty now, he forgot, or could not see, that Denmark had after all both saved and appreciated him; and that he was far from being the only writer who had been harshly criticised. It was necessary, however, in a fairy-tale to make the shadows as black as possible. But it was also necessary to have a happy ending, so he buttressed the end of the book by long quotations from enthusiastic German, English, and Danish criticisms of his works. This certainly proved one thing: he still felt he had to be defended; "they" might again attack him.

But they, the Danish critics, had more or less come to the conclusion to which an Icelandic writer had come several years before. He had rooms next to Andersen's in a Copenhagen hotel. Hearing a peculiar noise from his neighbour's rooms, he went in and found Andersen on the floor, sobbing and crying

as though his heart would break. Why? Because of a newspaper criticism! "I promise you", said Grimur Thomsen, "that I will never write a single line that could hurt you!" Thomsen kept his word, and more. He wrote an appreciation of the fairy-tales, which it gave Andersen great joy to quote: "The fairy-tale is a merry judgment-day on appearance and reality, on the outer shell and the inner kernel. A double current flows through it: an ironic upper current jesting and sporting with great and small, playing at shuttlecock with high and low; and then the deep, serious undercurrent, putting 'everything in its right place' with truth and justice."

Did he feel secure then, and as gratefully happy as he assured the world that he was; surveying it from this plateau of his fiftieth year? He might well be. He had bright rooms now, on the sunny side of the sail-haunted canal and looking across the water to the Swedish shore. "Carpet on the floor, flowers and greenery in the windows, good pictures on the walls." In spite of various alarums—"the cat bit me, at least the marks of its teeth showed, and I seem to feel feverish"—his health was good. He passed safely through two terrible cholera epidemics, in spite of precautions and presentiments. He had his hair curled and wore elegant clothes. Money was sufficient. Some of the jewels given him by monarchs he had sold so that he could take another Collin grandson on a continental tour in 1855. The journey was highly successful, dotted with the little excited cries of ladies, who suddenly discovered that the famous Danish writer Andersen was here in the compartment, or the inn, or the boat with them.

Yet, back in his pleasant rooms, he fell into sadness. He was lonely. The last time he had seen Jenny Lind she had left the stage; she was married, her young son stared at him with big eyes. He had no one, and no hopes of anyone. The fountain of passionate affection in him remained a fountain sealed. Friends are only embarrassed by passionate affection. But still, he had dear friends, old friends, people who had known him for ever. Why, except for the Collins, who were a habit, did he find it so difficult to go and see them? Old Colonel Guldberg, the man who first really saw him in Odense, and to whom he had sent the autobiography, had written back full of dignified

sorrow over his apparent desertion. Even Henriette Wulff and Signe Læssø he could not, somehow, go to see as freely as before. He needed them, and yet he kept away from them. He grieved and wondered at himself: what kind of being was he?

For some time the word "materialism" had been enough to start acid discussions or hot differences or cautious silences. It came from Germany, and was now invading Denmark. The godlessness which it implied was thought so dangerous that a professor at the university gave a series of lectures to combat this new peril, this materialism. One of his most attentive listeners was Hans Christian Andersen. He was studying the question, tracking it through books, novels, lectures. Long ago the Danish philosopher, Sibbern, had suggested that he write something philosophical, and he had decided this was the time. The subject was to be no less than the conflict between faith and science; the title *To Be, or Not To Be*; the outcome a reconciliation between the two, on the basis of victory for faith.

"It's only another case of vanity," Oehlenschlaeger had said laughingly to him once, "this craving of yours for an immortal soul!" Andersen replied that there must be immortality, or a loving God could not compensate for the world's injustice. But now experimental science was coming along and declaring that everything—man, beast, rock—was atoms, dead atoms, and there was nothing beyond. Furthermore, he revered science. His fatherly friend Ørsted, the discoverer of electromagnetism, had greatly influenced him in this direction; had even told him that he was doing much for science by his admiring account of it. Had he not written a rapturous prose-poem to Science as the new California of Poetry? He had been deeply thrilled by the railway train, by the beginnings of photography; had let his fancy rush into a far future when people would fly from America to Europe. He had even, but half in jest, imagined Liszt playing in Weimar and the sounds being carried by electricity to many cities. The first time he heard the telegraph at work—it was in Copenhagen and the Elsinore post office had the tact to vire one of his poems written during his school-days there—he had to hide his emotion at the world-changing miracle. He saw the

nations brought closer together, welded into a great fraternal communion. It made him feel religious; he felt, he said, as though he stood under the beating wings of a mighty spirit, felt lifted up to God.

And, though he loved science with a childlike joy in wonders, how could he do without God, his own guardian God whom he wanted to kiss and embrace when gratitude overflowed in him?

Ørsted's pantheism he could not follow, but he had dipped enough into it to lead his hero beyond the desert of "materialism" to a point of view where he saw the laws of science as God's thoughts. Immortality was more difficult; he presented his hero with a revealed conviction of it.

Having finished the book, he hurried to depart from Denmark and any possible criticism. Dickens had invited him to England, to stay with him at Gad's Hill. It was a visit full of roses, clover, new-mown hay, and a family life which Andersen insisted on seeing as charming. Dickens took him to London for a few glimpses of society, among which the most interesting was a short stay with Miss Burdett-Coutts. Her fortune seemed literally incredible to Andersen, but he liked her friendly directness. She was so simple, and her servants so loftily superior, that he confided all his little wants directly to her. He liked his bed made in a certain way, with the pillows very high, which the servants *would* not understand; so he told Miss Burdett-Coutts, and she made the bed herself, with his assistance.

Back at Gad's Hill one day, Mrs. Dickens found her guest, face down in the grass, bitterly weeping. "Are any of your friends dead?" she exclaimed, seeing him holding a paper.

Andersen faltered that it was a **Danish** criticism, a perfectly nasty criticism of his new novel.

Dickens came now, and tried to divert him by **joking**, but saw very soon that it was no joking matter. Then he **embraced** the quivering author, reminded him of his international fame, his great gifts. "This is ordinary criticism," he said, **writing** something with his foot in the sand, "and this is what happens to it," rubbing it out, "but the worth of the real book endures."

After a visit to Germany, where he was fortified by yet more royal and grand-ducal favour, he at last tiptoed home. Old

Collin had written warningly, "Put cold water in your blood". However, he found that the criticisms were not at all bad. But he got a finishing stroke from Sibbern, the kind old philosopher who had stimulated him to write the book. Sibbern simply and sweetly congratulated him on the failure of his attempt. In effect he said: All your troubles have come from the outside, from a wicked world; isn't it a good thing that you aren't able to write about a deeply sundered soul!

Andersen, though privately maintaining that he had a soul in strife as well as his other troubles, took the hint and devoted himself entirely to the tales. He was now nearly reconciled to them as his main title to fame. He even began to accept himself as the children's idolised author. They brought their little moist warm bouquets to him, all over Denmark. There were official tributes and touching private ones. Taking a ferry one icy morning, he saw a woman holding up a child to him. "Is he travelling so young, the poor thing?" "Oh no, but he gave me no peace till I had brought him to see you!"

Another time he gave his bag to a boy to carry. "Could you point out H. C. Andersen to me; they say he is on board?" the child asked, and then turned a fiery red when he learned his customer's identity, glancing at him quickly the whole time.

His tales too were now beginning to form part of the childhood of a generation that had just grown up; and he was asked to read aloud to assemblies of soldiers, even of working men, and they greeted him with spontaneous delight. He was now perfectly appreciated at home and abroad as the creator of his own genre. Every year about Christmas a slim volume of the stories appeared; some of them pure, inimitable gems, or perhaps not anything so hard, flowers rather, almost untranslatable in their masterly ease of language. Others suffered from the fact that they ought to have been poems, or short stories, or patriotic and edifying tracts, but had instead been unsuitably framed in the form of the tale, yet no unkindly critic disputed them. Andersen had been crowned king in his own dominion, and the king could do no wrong.

When he first found his way into his realm, he had gaily said that every fence, every flower, could tell him its story; now he

saw deeper, saw their origin in himself. "They lay like seeds in the mind," he wrote, "needing only a current, a ray of sun, a drop of distilled wormwood, to burst into flower"—and doubtless he put the story of all genuine creation into those few words.

CHAPTER XXII

IN 1858 the steamship *Austria* caught fire and sank in the Atlantic, not far from America. Among the passengers was Henriette Wulff; and her name, Andersen soon learned, was not among the few survivors.

Henriette Wulff dead, Henriette Wulff burned, Henriette Wulff, pale, crying, despairing, throwing herself into the sea—his imagination pictured horror after horror. She, more than anyone else, had really been the “sister” he liked to call her; and, in spite of her frail hunched body, she had been an elder, protecting sister—the one who shielded him from her mother’s well-meant preaching and from her father’s choleric outbursts. They had had a myriad smiles in common; she had listened to his earliest productions; had been one of the first to steer him out of his poverty awkwardness.

Why had he not gone to see her oftener in late years? It needed a real explosion of will-power in him not to slacken into a remorseful despair, bordering on insanity. But he shook himself free at last, and he poured his emotion into letters for old Mrs. Læssø, who had gone to live in a remote province. He told her how he reproached himself for not seeing her oftener when she lived in Copenhagen. He assured her of his filial devotion, attachment, heart full of friendship, but “I sauntered away from my affectionate thoughts, did not let you feel them enough”.

He was too hard on himself, and yet the friends of his youth might with some justice have said that he was not the same. With justice, but only because a developing spirit is not the same at fifty-odd as at twenty, a relevant fact which old friends are peculiarly prone to forget. But first impressions are nearly ineradicable, and especially those which the appealing but naïve and uncouth boy from Odense had made. There were not now many left of the people who remembered him in that stage, except the most important of all—the Collins. He was still untravelling attempting to convince them that he was worldly-wise and world-famous, in fact “the most famous Dane”. What other

return could he make to them for their kindness; how else redress the balance between their eternal giving and his receiving, unless they saw and admitted that his fame was real and shed lustre on their house?

But they refused to be impressed. Long ago, old Jonas Collin, the patriarch of the family, had entrusted him to them, and once and for all they had accepted him, with liking, even with their own undemonstrative love, but love because of his honesty, kindliness, dependability, not because of his fame. They were not interested in fame. They were absorbed in being themselves, and this sometimes brought them near the danger of being self-sufficient. It would not have hurt their feelings greatly if Andersen had slipped more away from them; indeed the younger members of the widening family left records which showed how they resented the amount of attention he still demanded, especially from Edward Collin's wife. She, Henriette Collin, was the one who came nearest to understanding that Andersen's imaginary sufferings might nevertheless be sufferings, and it was to her he carried them.

This bored the others and caused jealousy in at least one breast, that of her daughter. When little Louise came home from school and ran to join her mother, she would sometimes have to stop on the threshold of the living-room. Weeping and lamentation resounded in there, and on peeping in she saw her mother sitting in the large black chair, trying to calm and console Andersen, who either sat dissolved in sobs before her or ran up and down, his enormous handkerchief fluttering. But when Andersen wasn't there, they all used to laugh at his whining, so why was her mother so still, why did she wave to her to go away, to stop coughing for attention! She couldn't go in, couldn't even cross the room. Mother was busy. Mother had to take care of Andersen. And when the weeping was over he would eat a large plate of sandwiches, every one of them! Horrid Andersen! She hated him, even if he did write "The Nightingale", which her mother would tell her to read when she complained. She hated the sight of his gigantic galoshes in the hall, and for the rest of her life he was the "family-tormentor".

Little Louise was rather special; to most of the others he was like a nice old friend or-uncle, though no more remarkable in

their minds than any other nice old friend or uncle with whom the family was blessed. If he were special, it was in the amount of attention he craved. Even the patient Henriette Collin would sometimes sigh, "No, he is *too* dreadful!" This not entirely unjustifiable point of view never spread directly to Andersen, yet it was borne in on him that the house of the Collins no longer altogether represented the "home of homes". But he never wavered in his devotion to them. Edvard still managed his business affairs and supplied good advice on request. He attended every family feast as a matter of course, and for him they were unalterably and forever his family. But it is possible to feel the greatest devotion to one's family and yet to be happier in another circle, and this at last happened to Andersen.

This circle did not consist of his friends of the castles and manor-houses, though these had extended so as to leave scarcely a parish in Denmark where he was not a welcome guest at the moated grange. He felt quite at ease in this society, now that he had been at so many courts and had travelled enough to cut as distinguished a figure as any bestarred Excellency. Several more decorations had been added to him, and his State pension had been nearly doubled. Simple, unaffected, and utterly without snobbery in his manner, he could nevertheless change to lightning-quick superiority if anyone tried to snub him, and in that case a single biting remark of his could silence an attacker forever, no matter what his rank might be.

But very few cared to attack him. His hosts valued the adornment of his fame, his easy, charming manner, his never-failing wealth of vivid conversation. Andersen, on his side, liked their good manners, and he very much liked the comfort. "I am never really happy except in big rooms." They let him come and go as he wanted to; stay in his suite and write, or take part in excursions. It was an ideal way of chaining pleasant fortnights together, both in summer and winter.

Yet it was not friendship. It was comfort. The Collins were not comfort, inelastically bourgeois both in thinking and living, but they were friendship. Could not the two desirables exist in the same circle?

Many artists have sighed this wish, mostly in vain, and Hans Christian Andersen especially had no right to hope for its fulfil-

ment. He was charming, but he was difficult: increasingly sensitive; morbidly intent on being "appreciated"; easily worried, frightened, hurt, and all too able to express it. At the same time, mere warm uncritical sympathy would not have been enough—plenty of the international species "adoring female" were palpitating to give him this now that he was famous, but he rushed from them in horror.

What he needed was intelligent sympathy, wise indulgence, cultivated understanding, aesthetic comfort, cosmopolitan interests, combined with the cordial simplicity of Danish home life.

These goods from Fairyland he actually found. Since on moonlit nights by the Odense river, he had lifted his clear voice in song and hoped for the favourable attention of a Chinese prince, he had loved music. It was by his singing that he first attracted Siboni's attention and began his conquest of Copenhagen. He had often written librettos for Danish composers. On his journeys he had met and made friends of Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Liszt. He did not "understand" music or the wizardries of counterpoint, but it often inspired a creative mood in him, and always magnetically drew him. He was thus drawn to one of the homes in Copenhagen where the hostess was herself a brilliant pianist; where musicians and artists met, and where the chamber-music he liked was as naturally performed as in some houses books are read aloud.

This was the home of the Henriques, one of the several finely cultivated Jewish families who had lived for generations in Denmark and were Danish to the core, but whose interests ramified throughout the world. The Henriques and their relatives the Melchiors, to whom very soon Andersen became even more attached, were in banking, broking, shipping, and wholesale commerce, where their names were as synonymous for probity as they were for benevolence exercised in secret. But for them the getting and giving of money was not enough: they reached out with warm eagerness for art and intelligence wherever it was manifested, and their friendship with Andersen was as natural as the growth of a plant in a soil that is suited to it.

In Odense he had liked the Jewish school to which he went

for a short time, and in Slagelse his time of trouble had been lightened by visits to the house of a Jewish family. The Henriques and the Melchiors united cosmopolitan culture with Danish warmth and simplicity; and their households had the comfort as well as the bright family life which the ageing poet in lonely rooms could not help craving.

Undoubtedly, to use an expression Ørsted would have sanctioned, their wave-lengths and his were very similar. His own quick, intuitive intelligence had much in common with theirs; and they understood and respected his sensitiveness and "vanity" as few people could whose racial memory did not include poverty, persecution, and under-valuation. With their own sensitiveness they felt and shielded his, intelligently avoiding scenes. Especially was this true of Mrs. Melchior, into whose house Andersen soon came as a habitual guest, with his favourite compliment that this was his "home of homes".

CHAPTER XXIII

A SUMMER evening at the Lake of Lucerne; the dining-room of a Grand Hotel, a fountain, music. Music within and music without, sounding from a lantern-decorated boat. It is in honour of the great author staying at the hotel: he is called out; he has to thank his admirers: all the ladies at the hotel join in the ovation.

"Disgusting; how can they be so unwomanly!" mutters the thin, fair, sharp-featured young man who is with the great author. Just previously he has had another shock—a beautiful English girl has missed her steamer on purpose, merely so that she might stay and see the great man eat his dinner. Worse: she had openly envied the young man; told him she wished she were in his place.



JONAS COLLIN, THE YOUNGER

Jonas Collin, son of Edvard, grandson of his namesake the patriarch himself, was travelling with Hans Christian Andersen in the summer of 1861, and it seemed to him that the world was full of flattery and lies. He often warned his elderly companion against it. Jonas was headed for science; zoology was his specialty, his joy was in collecting snails, scorpions, lizards. Though only twenty-one, he perceived how lamentably unscientific Andersen was. In Rome, where they had just been, he had explained to the poet the enormous advantage of science over literature. What good was literature? The poet did not even

understand the first thing about himself, or his methods of production. Of what use was he?

Jonas bristled with youth and high-mindedness. Andersen lost his temper, made matters worse by crying, went to his room and returned in a couple of hours in smiling calm. "Read that", he said.

It was an innocent little tale, "The Snail and the Rose-tree".

The snail reproached the rose for merely blooming, no kind of evolution in it, nothing but roses, roses every year. "A lazy life!"

"True, true", the rose replied. "What I had was given me, but you have got still more. You are a thinker, one of these deep natures, one of the greatly gifted who will amaze the world."

"I don't intend to", said the snail. "The world is none of my business: what do I care about the world? I have enough with myself and in myself."

A few more similar interchanges between the two, then Jonas lifted his face from the manuscript and grinned. "Oh, of course, that's easy. You're the rose—but—don't let us argue about who is the snail!"

They were friends again. Jonas sounded like an insufferable prig, but only by an unfair contrast. Andersen cared more for him than for any of the young generation; liked him as much as he had once embarrassed Edvard by liking him. He had to focus his affection for the Collins on one of them; first it was Edvard's sister Louise, then Edvard, now it was his son.

Indeed, Andersen's new friends had not made him love the Collins less; the strange alchemies of time and circumstance had really changed them into blood-relations for him; and the greatest proof was their unique power to hurt him, involuntary though it might be.

No doubt there were people who said that it was easy for the Henriques and the Melchiors to adopt him when he was famous. Anybody could see him now. No one certainly stressed this point of view more than the new friends; they were always making their gifts and hospitality easy by underlining that he gave and they received. They might not, any more than the Collins, be

creative artists, but their nerves had that understanding of artists which is often a part of Jewish sensitiveness.

If it was not a part of Jonas, the young snail-collector, he could not help that. Rectilinear, austere, modest, fastidious, some might have preferred him to the garrulous celebrity who brimmed over in all directions. But in Rome they had met a man who saw them both: Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, the Norwegian writer, who was then at the beginning of his fame.

Wise and slightly malicious people who had read Bjørnson's stories said to Andersen, "*You won't like them!*" but he read them and stormed, "*You do me an injustice. Why should not I be able to appreciate real poetry!*" He at once sought the author; and as the strong, energetic, volcanic Norwegian was as genuine a being as the soft, sensitive Dane with the clear quick smile they both liked each other immensely.

Without in the least hurting Andersen's feelings, Bjørnson could write to him that he loved his friendship though he could not understand why it had been given him. Easy to understand, he said, that one had to be fond of Andersen! so original a nature, such achievement, such radiant love shining through all his words and being, and so many weaknesses to be tenderly handled, but why should Andersen like one who was so hard and violent, and who, at least in his presence, contributed so little to the conversation—partly because Andersen was usually talking; he could not understand it, only gratefully accept. And add that though there was no Dane about whom one could make so many jokes as H. C. Andersen, neither was there one who since Holberg had made so many himself!

But he wanted to be remembered to young Collin. "In some ways he knows me better than you. For though you can in a moment seize both the kernel and shell of a matter, you then go on to something new." There had been a strength he liked to recall in the hand-clasp of that young man; something in him which was pure and firm, sincere and sure. "Stormy as my life is bound to be, I may need such people. . . ."

Before Jonas and Andersen left Switzerland, they received word that old Collin was dying, and that they need not hurry home as they could not reach there in time.

Nor did they hurry. They travelled up through Germany by easy stages, received and fêted everywhere, Jonas having to admit Andersen's indubitable fame, but deeply distrustful of ovations—as his grandmother had been, when Andersen told her how he was praised in the foreign press, and she said, "I wonder if they aren't just poking fun at you?"

Old Collin had been too tactful a man ever to have said anything so direct, but he had often frowned on the avid search for "appreciation". In fact, he had quite often frowned, of late years. He was of course Hans Christian's saviour, but when Jonas and Andersen reached Denmark, the former went straight to Copenhagen, and the latter visited a couple of friends before he learned that Collin was not dead yet, though he had been unconscious for some time.

Then he went to Copenhagen, in time to see the old man serene in his coffin; finally and conclusively unimpressed by any worldly show whatsoever.

At his funeral there was the quiet acceptance of the kind of death that comes as a ripening. In the peace of completed work his last years had been spent waiting for it; protecting a couple of old dogs and an old servant, whose usefulness no one could imagine until it was found out that the old man sent him secretly with money to anyone whose distress he discovered through the newspaper.

Soon after Collin, Ingemann went the same calm way. Andersen's two oldest friends were gone. The one had tried to give him strength, the other sympathy; both of their best.

Doubtless, in the justificatory review of himself which must have followed, Andersen was poignantly sorry that he could not tell them he was still a credit to them—how his tales were now most popular in Hindustani, and about the gold box set in diamonds given him by King Frederik VII.

Or about dining at the King's table, when Frederik, who was not a prohibitionist in anything, raised his glass to him. Andersen, relying on the green colour of the Rhine-wine goblet, had water in his, but raised it, smiling, when Frederik put his down hard and suddenly roared: "When you drink with your King you don't cheat!"

"Your Majesty, when I drink with my King, water turns into wine", came the soothing reply, and Frederik laughed.

Frederik VII, rotund and jolly, had made himself impossible with nice people by morganatically marrying a dancer, who made him an excellent, economical, congenial wife. The Countess Danner, as he had her entitled, was not ashamed of her theatrical past, but the King did not always like her to refer to it. Soon after their marriage, Andersen was invited to dine at the Palace, and to meet the Countess first privately. He went into a little room, where Frederik VII came towards him, his hand in the Countess's. "Good day, Andersen", he said, "this is my wife, and this is our poet Andersen." "Lord, I know Andersen well," she exclaimed, "haven't I worked in his opera *The Raven*!" The King sent her a lightning look, and she stopped. But all through dinner she kept humming little airs into Andersen's ear, and asking him did he remember.

Another time when Andersen and the Countess had conversed a long while, Frederik VII came over and said, using the good old royal third-person style: "What is he talking about all this time? I don't know what there is about him so captivating to the ladies; it must be something I can't discover, but they are all certainly very fond of him!"

Andersen had to find an answer, and happened to say, "It must be hidden capacities, Your Majesty".



SILHOUETTE BY
H. C. ANDERSEN

"What!" the King cried, and looked him up and down. "He'll never make me believe that; he doesn't look at all like that!"

No one could tell this story, or some other story, even one with hidden capacities, with more Mark Twainish humour than Andersen. And when he had told it, with the most funereal face, in which, however, the lively eyes came near betraying him, he would burst into laughter, so loud, so fresh, so refreshing that even the gloomiest had to join in.

Not even serious young Jonas Collin could resist this Andersen, the man whose humour glints in the best of his stories, who about this time wrote "The Beetle" and "What Father Does is Always Right". When he invited his zoological friend

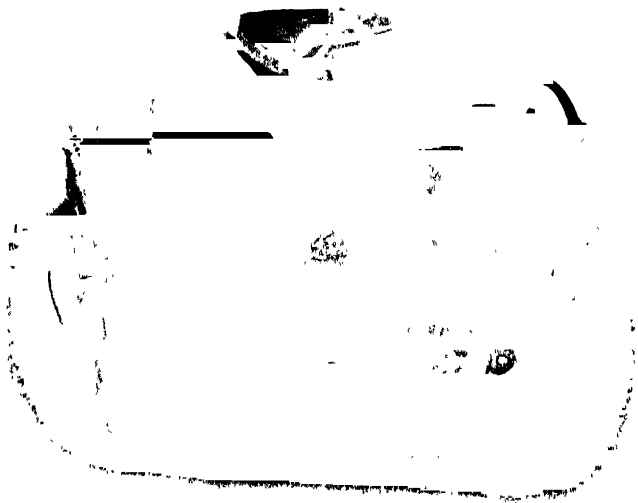
to travel with him in Spain, Jonas gladly accepted. It was to be a long trip. Andersen, who never tired of not winning in the lottery, had hoped fortune would send him the money for Spain, but instead it was a new collected edition of his works that brought him the means of this half-year's travel.

Barcelona, Malaga, Granada, Cadiz, Sevilla, Cordova, Madrid, Toledo—they saw them all, and since his first glimpse of Italy nothing had given Andersen so much pleasure. The brown, kind Spanish soldiers in Odense were among his happiest childhood memories, and he felt as drawn to them again. No women were ever so admired by him as the Spanish. He saw well enough that the black hair with the white flower in it often was greasy, but his whole direct, inflammable nature responded entirely to Andalusia. At last here was a land where no one was ashamed of having feeling and showing it; here it kindled, and rose and burst out in dance, song, music. He quivered to the beauty of gipsies, flowers, skies: all the liquid black glances, gliding steps, reds and yellows, all the gorgeous, fresh, unashamed youth. Oh to be young! He felt young; he wrote fiery verses, Jonas Collin notwithstanding, who did not conceal his disapproval at all this unseasonable emotion. Had Jonas ever been young? Here, in Andalusia, he pottered around visiting silver mines, or coddling two pet tortoises!

The idyll of Granada was marred with cold criticism by the young man, who was too old, of the elderly man, who was too young. Andersen was hurt, as only a Collin could hurt him. What was their quarrel about? Nothing tangible: apparently a difference of opinion as to a jocular anonymous letter, in reality a conflict of temperaments. Andersen, with the fatal imagination that creates its desire's fulfilment in advance, had thought it would be so different. He had reached the age where unused paternal feeling made him long to do something for the young, all concentrated in this youth. Yet he wanted them to be friends, equal and affectionate friends, in spite of the gulf in age. But though the older may be willing and eager to waive the age-class rank and ceremony, he may find the younger scandalised, even horrified, occupied only with pushing this intruder back into his age.

So it was naturally with Edvard's conventional son. Perhaps, too, Andersen's long-dammed-up emotions may have seemed to Jonas alarmingly concentrated on himself. At any rate, the more Andersen wooed his confidence, the stiffer he became. What was it to him that the rest of the world, even in the illiteracy of darkest Spain, strove to please and honour his famous companion, or that, on their arrival in Paris, Bjørnson organised a great Scandinavian feast for him? Those were vanities which merely made a Collin curl up tighter under his tortoise shell.

During the next year of 1863, Andersen wrote his book on Spain, the best of his travel books—beauty and humour woven firmly into it, and not until the end of that year did the travelling companions bridge over their differences; and then only because the older and more necessitous humbled himself to the younger and harder.



CHAPTER XXIV

IN December 1863 Frederik VII died, and at night from his windows on the wide canal harbour, Andersen saw the funeral ship sail slowly in, black-draped, torch-lit, sad music playing and all the church-bells of the city tolling.

They might well toll. War broke again over Denmark with the new year. A separate constitution had been given to the Duchy of Holstein, so as to keep Slesvig as Danish as possible, and the new bellicose rulers of Prussia needed no more excuse. Uniting with Austria, the two great Powers managed to overcome the desperate Danish resistance, and to take away both Holstein and Slesvig, that which was justly German, and that which for thousands of years had been Danish to the core.

All Danes staggered as if in a nightmare, but no one so felt the incredible grief as Hans Christian Andersen. That spring should come under these circumstances, that apple trees should don their rose-white clouds and cowslips star the meadows; he could hardly understand it. He loved Germany: he had become reconciled to it after 1848, and now this! Was Denmark lost? "Shall our language in a hundred years be merely something which is remembered on the Norwegian coast?"

He tried, on the advice of friends, to distract himself by writing an opera-text, but it was mere occupation; his heart's blood went into a few songs that held a whole people's suffering. But he did not hate. He, of whose writings it was said later that next to the New Testament no books had done more to preach the gospel of love on earth, could only console himself by clinging to this story: In a hospital at the front where there were wounded of both nationalities, a German lady handed some refreshment to a Danish soldier. He thanked her, but, hearing he was Danish, she took it away from him again, and, turning to another wounded, asked him his nationality. "Prussian", he replied, whereupon she gave him the refreshment. He pushed it away: "I do not want the gift which you

took away from him," he said; "he is my comrade now, this is not the field of battle."

The spirit of ladies rather than that of common soldiers, however, was decisive at the Peace, and Denmark was amputated, left to bleed white; supposed to remain, if at all, as a woeful, anaemic little excrescence north of the great new empire. If this did not happen, but rather the contrary, it was because sane patriots took for their motto that "What outward has been lost shall inward be regained", setting their national pride once and for all in culture and not in militarism.

In the determined activity of reconstruction, it might seem as if Hans Christian Andersen had no part, since, except for reading his tales aloud to working-men's meetings, he did nothing "social"; and as usual he fled from "politics" with his increasing and almost insane fear of attracting unfavourable attention. He was still the simple fairy-tale reverer of royalty; touched and delighted that the new King, the highly respectable Christian IX, often invited him to stay with his large family on terms of near intimacy; charmed with the respectful attention paid to him by the Swedish royal family on a visit to Stockholm, and more than thrilled by a visit to Paris where the Danish Crown Prince called in person to congratulate him on his birthday and to take him to the races at Vincennes. He was driven thither in a carriage with four horses and outriders, and installed on a soft purple seat in the imperial box, next to a son of Prince Murat. There was also a new decoration, that of Our Lady of Guadeloupe, sent by Maximilian of Mexico.

What indeed, might the social workers have exclaimed, is Andersen doing for the new democratic Danish culture!

They did not so exclaim. Denmark had realised that Hans Christian Andersen *was* Danish culture, or a very important part of it, and that, like the spring-green beeches by the clear blue sea, he had done enough and to spare for Denmark simply by unfolding himself. When he visited Portugal, the twenty-odd Danish ships in the harbour of Lisbon all ran up their flags for him. Danish consuls and ambassadors felt it a national duty to smooth his paths abroad, and at home, in the year 1867, the King bestowed on him the much coveted and grandly absurd title of State Councillor.

A couple of years before, after the long unproductivity of the war, Andersen had written the most wistful of his Tales, because it began with a cry that the tales would no longer come.

He wrote of a man who knew so many new fairy-tales that he never had to look for them, they just came and knocked at his door. But now they did not come. Where had they gone to? Had the dark days driven them away for ever?

" 'I wonder if the Fairy-Tale will never knock again!' And he remembered it so vividly in all the different forms it had come to him: now young and fair, Spring herself, a graceful little girl with a wreath of sweet woodruff in her hair and a beech-branch in her hand: her eyes shone like deep forest lakes in clear sunshine. But it had come too as an old pedlar, who opened his box and let silken ribbons flutter forth with verses and inscriptions, full of old memories. Yet it was loveliest when it came as a little old woman with silver-white hair and eyes so large, so wise: she alone knew how to tell of the most ancient times, even long before princesses spun with golden spindles while dragons and great serpents lay on guard outside."

Would he have to go and seek the Fairy-Tale? He had to, he did, but, except for a few glimpses—"The Snow-Man", "The Beetle", "What a Father Does"—and for happy fragments in formless wholes, he never found it again in the full unbidden perfection of the earlier tales, which had sprung out of his own pain and joy, hope and disappointment.

Another man, someone less dependent on what people said, would have turned again to novels and plays, enriching them with the sureness of experience. Andersen might have done this. His book on Spain, even his last light little play, *When the Spanish were Here*, pointed in that direction, but he had lived for what people said, he had lived for fame. The vision of that glorious toy had pulled him from the slums; and since fame had come through the fairy-tales, then this form his creativeness must take.

It did not really matter; not even that most of the later tales were rather feeble imitations of the earlier. "The Little Mermaid", "The Wild Swans", "Thumbelina", "The Shadow", "The Emperor's New Clothes", "The Pig-Herd", "The Snow Queen", "The Ugly Duckling", and many others had captured a generation twice: first as absorbing stories, and then as

absorbing little worlds in miniature; life in miniature, masquerading but meaningful. The radiant love which Bjørnson had found in all his words and in his whole being, his readers too had found and felt, and they wanted to show their gratitude.

The expression of this desire came from a place which meant more to him even than he realised. Odense formally invited him to come and receive the freedom of the city on the 6th of December 1867. He asked them to wait until 1869, when it would have been just fifty years since he left for Copenhagen, but, fond though all Danes are of anniversaries, this time his friends looked at him, objected, and said: Never postpone a good thing!

Shivering with cold, and with a cold, and with a ferocious neuralgic toothache, he arrived in his native town, where the Cathedral overtopped houses neater but not so picturesque as those he remembered. The Bishop brought him to his own home, but he could not sleep the night before the ceremony; he was racked by pain, emotion, suspense, terror. It was not made less on hearing the next day that all the schools were closed and the whole city decorated in his honour. He got into a carriage, remarking to his startled companions that he now knew how it felt to be driving to one's execution. As if through a haze he saw the red and white flags billowing from every house on the way to the city hall; the welcoming crowds thronging the streets; the community singers parading. He was told they were playing his songs, but he hardly heard them, intent only on lasting through the ceremony. At last, in the City Hall, before everybody who was anybody, the Mayor received him, made a speech, gave him the parchment, and nine great hurrahs resounded.

He thanked them, but with no words could he reach to the depths that were stirred in him. Dukes, princes, kings, emperors—what were they all as against the Mayor of Odense! Fleeting pictures must have passed before him—his crazy grandfather, his cracked father, his mother washing at the river, himself losing a wooden shoe as he ran away from the jeering boys—"There goes the play-writer!" Then his confirmation, the haughty Dean, and now this: the officials in uniform, the clergy in full regalia, and the Mayor. All for him. Odense proud of him!

It was almost too much; only his tenacious will kept him con-

scious, but as they drove back to the Bishop's house, he began to see the bright flags, to hear and to feel the waves of admiring well-wishing. Yet dared he be happy? What would the newspapers of the capital say? Might they not jeer? It would not matter, he tried to think, if they jeered at him, but suppose that Odense should be attacked! He did not breathe tranquilly until he had seen a Copenhagen paper, in which these fears were shown to be groundless. Copenhagen joined with Odense! Now



SQUARE IN ODENSE

he could enjoy the banquet at the City Hall; look at his bust which was set up there; listen to the songs and speeches and toasts addressed to him; make his own inimitably graceful responses. All through the meal, telegrams of congratulation kept arriving from the whole country, from associations and from individuals, one from the King himself. He floated in admiration, emotion, warmth, and, alas, toothache, because of the emotion and the warmth. It got worse and worse, just as the feast was getting better and better.

Now, in fact, as the evening fell, the culmination was about to come. Nearly fifty years ago, when Hans Christian had been trying to get his mother's consent for his journey to Copenhagen, he had reminded her of the wise woman's prophecy that his

career would be great and some day the city of Odense would be illuminated for him.

Through Andersen's autobiography, Odense was not unaware of this prophecy. The hour had come to fulfil it. He was asked to step to the tall open window. From every house shone lanterns and candles, and now the various guilds of the city came marching with music in torchlight processions, banners waving. They halted before the City Hall; the square was crowded. They cheered Hans Christian Andersen, the torches shone brightly, a special song was sung for him.

It was the very height of his life, and the depth of pain. The ice-cold December air, cutting through the open window, whipped his toothache into raging torture, and he could not leave, he had to stand there, sneaking a glance at the printed copy of the song. So many verses!

But as it was the height, so it was the end. When the song was done, and the torches flung into a bonfire, the toothache suddenly stopped. He saw the kind eyes all around him, the many outstretched hands: the day was over. He could go to bed—though not to sleep; his thoughts kept him awake till dawn.

CHAPTER XXV

FOR a man with any dramatic sense, it must be almost embarrassing to go on living after he has been the object of such reverence as Andersen received in his native town. He felt this; in the notes for the continuation of his autobiography, he stopped at December 1867. Nevertheless, he went on living. In spite of failing health, his appetite for life and travel was as keen as ever. It actually worried him that the year before he had yielded to the persuasion of friends and had bought a bed. Until then he had always lived in hotels or furnished rooms, but slowly his own things had accumulated round him. All he lacked was a bed. It was common sense to buy it, but he felt as though the chains of the householder were clanking about his legs. "In a hotel my wings would be free." The bed was good; it was expensive; that too made him grimace. "I can see it will be my death-bed, because if it does not last as long as that it would not be worth the money! Oh, if I were only twenty once again, I'd put an ink-well on my back, take two shirts and a pair of socks, tuck a quill-pen at my side, and walk out into the wide world!"

But if he did have to own a bed, he did not have to bother much about house-keeping. As in his distant student days, he still ate his dinners out; rotating in a fixed circle of friends, which nicely combined the new and old elements of his life. Monday was the day of Edvard Collin and his wife—Monday somehow seemed to match dear Edvard: sober, busy, real, earnest. Tuesday another Collin received him: Ingeborg, Edvard's lively sister. Wednesday belonged to the Ørstedes. He had dined there ever since he came to the city. In the early days he came there once, full of an unjust review, but only Mrs. Ørsted listened to him, her husband was distraught. Back in his room, Andersen grieved loudly (it was the night the Iclander heard him) when the door opened and in came Ørsted. He had walked the long way to say that he was sorry he had not listened: his mind had been full of a scientific problem; only just now had he learned

from his wife that Andersen was unhappy, and he came to console him. Now there were only the widow and a daughter left; Andersen loved them but they would give him sweet-soup, a standard Danish dish, but one which set his nerves frightfully on edge.

Thursday had been the day on which old Collin received all the children, including Andersen: now it belonged to the Melchiors, who had become just as central in his life. The years had only strengthened the feeling of happy, peaceful, contented comfort which their friendship gave him. They had so many quiet ways of being kind. Early one dark winter morning, before Andersen was starting on a journey, Moritz Melchior arrived with fur-lined boots in all sizes and made him choose a pair. And, during 1867, when he yearned, as he thought in vain, to make a second visit to the Paris Exhibition, Melchior so tactfully and privately offered him the money that he was able to accept it; probably the only gift of the sort he ever accepted, jealous as he was of his earned independence. But the best thing the Melchiors did was to open their family circle to him both in town and at their place on the Sound near Copenhagen. "Quietude" was its name, and Andersen's long and frequent visits proved that he found it.

Friday's dinner was given him by poor Henriette Wulff's married sister, a link with his earliest youth. Saturday saw him at the town house of one of his aristocratic friends, and on Sunday he dined with the Henriques and revelled in music. Usually he ate his lunches out too, and most of his evenings were spent in the theatre.

Every year he produced new stories, and now they met with unflinching, almost monotonous enthusiasm. "The Dryad", the mediocre result of his visit to the Paris Exhibition, he read aloud publicly, harvesting storms of applause. A play, one of his old failures, was revived and most favourably reviewed. At the University he heard a Professor deliver three whole lectures on himself and his technique of tale-writing. Without a doubt he learned a lot of surprising things both about himself and his technique.

The usual critics had ceased to terrify; now, if anything, they

applauded too easily. But even an extremely unusual critic, one of the dreaded and brilliant, a young man who openly flaunted radical, materialistic, tradition-smashing ideas, joined in Andersen's praise. This was Georg Brandes, and he began by frightening Andersen in a private letter, in which he accused him of having done more than anyone to hurt the cause of good criticism. A critic, Brandes said, was a man who knew how to read and who taught others how to read, but Andersen had pictured him as a sort of monster who went round wearing a stomach-belt of vipers. He hoped Andersen would feel differently when he had read his, Brandes's, forthcoming piece on his work.

With what trembling this piece was read, one may imagine, but there was no cause for fear. Brandes knew the difference between sentiment and sentimentality. His deft touch pulled away a little of the latter and a few mannerisms, but only to reveal Andersen's genuine greatness. Andersen admitted that this critic at least was a good gardener in the garden of literature.

Immediately after this most perceptive of the tributes to him came yet another anniversary: 1869—the fiftieth year after his arrival in Copenhagen. Gifts and royal graciousness were showered on him, and two hundred and forty-four notabilities attended the banquet in his honour. "I thought I was in heaven", a guest said; "all the people had become both good and happy; one felt like shaking everybody's hand"—not a bad testimony to the influence of the festival's centre.

Andersen's life could now easily have been likened to a lovely and peaceful evening: a sky swirled with the sunset colours of fame, the air gentle with friendship.

Now he no longer needed to fight either for fame or for the recognition of it. What he told his mother fifty years ago had been realised: First you go through a great many awful things, and then you become famous! With this goal stimulating him, he had not only conquered his weaknesses but made them serve him. Brandes had seen it. "A more reserved mind could not thus feel the least impression. A harder mind could not combine his elasticity with its stiffer attitude. A mind receptive

to criticism and philosophy could not be so naïve. It is as senseless to expect masculine force from the poet of the fairy-tale as it would be to go to the hare for lion-like courage. The grace of the hare is in its weakness and its timidity."

But though neither weakness nor fear had brought Andersen to the top, now that he was there they broke bounds and played at being masters instead of servants. This was partly age, partly the beginning of fatal liver disease, but perhaps it was most of all that the pressure of striving was gone. The iron hoop of circumstance no longer restrained his weaknesses.

He had, for instance, always been addicted to reading his work aloud to whomever he could get hold of, ever since the tragedy *Abor and Elvira* was shared with all the neighbours in Odense. Not the least of his educators' troubles had been in trying to stem this overflowing. In his school-days Meisling had gone so far as to forbid it altogether. To protect him from ridicule, Edvard Collin had had at least once to do the same, in the period before his fame. During this desert period, he had sometimes been reduced to capturing the maid who came to clean his room at the hotel and making her sit down while he declaimed his latest, oblivious of her meek remarks that there were other rooms to be cleaned. But now when, even with his halting knowledge of foreign tongues, royal and imperial families had listened gratefully to him, there was no escape for his friends. (It must be remembered, of course, that he had no wife.) In one day he visited the houses of eight different friends to read them the same story, but usually his hour came after dinner.

He preferred a grown-up audience. They sat down before him, after candles had been placed at his side. Utter silence reigned; if it did not, if someone coughed, or if some audacious soul ventured to request one tale rather than another, he would snort, grimace, wrinkle up his nose. But though people might be tired of hearing the same story for the *n*th time, they were eager for anything new, and when he pulled the manuscript with the big angular writing out of his pocket, crossed his legs, rested his huge hand on his knee, and bent his broad back, he had no need to raise his soft, rather hoarsely veiled voice to be heard. The grave was no quieter. First he named the title

of the story, then he put on his glasses, gave a final sharp look around, and began to read. He had neither especial talent nor training for reading aloud, but he knew how to create a mood and how to convey his personality.

Although he now carried his belief in compulsory listening for others so far as to be mercilessly intent on it, yet there was a sensible element. His great contribution to Danish style had been to introduce the free rhythm of speech into writing, and to read a thing aloud several times helped him to hear the bookish words and to correct them.

There was no sensible explanation possible of the host of fears in which he now too often lost himself. He had always been plagued by smaller anxieties at which his friends laughed, but these were beginning to whirl up into alarming proportions. Would the mark of the little dog's teeth give him hydrophobia? Would the German porter who happened to see his purse come in the night and choke him? Had he drunk poison instead of medicine? Would the prune-stone he swallowed—? Had he really put out the candle before he left his room? The last became a haunting torture. Jonas Collin saw him stand a long while squeezing the extinguished wick with his fingers, go to the door, return, squeeze it again, only to ask when they were in the street, "Did I put out that candle?" to which Jonas characteristically answered that he really could not take the responsibility of saying so; and the poor man wandered back up to his room. Or, frequent source of anguish, he feared he had mixed up letters, put them in the wrong envelopes, or that he had forgotten private documents in books. His journal was full of anxious entries, sometimes comic, but he was not altogether unaware of it. "Five mosquitoes bit me." "My blood is curdled; I may get apoplexy." "I am thinking of becoming paralysed or apoplectic." "I am tired of life—to-night."

His fear of crossing open spaces was definitely abnormal; so was his groundless fear of offending people. "As I left the theatre I happened to touch a man with my stick, very gently, so that I did not apologise, but now this is driving me nearly 'insane. . . . I ought to talk to a doctor, but to whom? One who has insight, one who could enlighten my sick mind."

The doctors he knew were kind but jocular; they tried to

laugh him out of his sick fancies, as they called them; blaming everything on age and a diseased liver. They could not know that the worst of his mental sufferings had its roots deep in his youth. He did not want to dwell on the dark part of it; with all his generous, loving nature he desired to forget and forgive every injury. At this very time an ill-advised person had published a collection of letters from eminent people, among which was a letter from Hauch about the young Andersen. It was written just after the publication of his first book, *A Walking Tour*. Hauch, who did not then know Andersen, ascribed the book's success to its author's willingness "to crawl in the dust and be trampled on. He forces himself into every family, licks everyone's spittle, and is as limp and without character in his person as in his poems." Since then, in spite of Hauch's caricaturing novel, he and Andersen had become real friends; and the latter's first thought on reading this letter in the book was: What a pity; how it will hurt Hauch! Half ailing though he was, he sought him at once and assured him he knew this had been published against his wish, and that he well knew it had long ceased to represent Hauch's opinion of him. Hauch broke down, and Andersen consoled him in every way.

There was no bitterness in him about this: there was no conscious bitterness in him about anybody, but he was plagued with dreams. They nearly always centred about Meisling and old Collin, and the anxious dependence of his youth. In dreams he heard the red-faced Rector thunder at him again, call him idiot and blockhead (though of late he prefaced it by calling him Mr. State Councillor); heard the prophecy that he would end in the asylum and his works as waste-paper. In one dream he ran away, he could not stand it; then suddenly he met one of Collin's grandchildren, who shook his head dubiously and said: "But what will Grandfather say, and have you talked to Uncle Edvard about it?"

Or, again and again, he would dream that old Collin himself was scolding him.

Gradually the dreams reached over into the daylight, and awoke in the consciousness as very efficient forms of self-torture. He was famous and recognised now, yes, but then!

At Collin's house he was not always introduced when distinguished visitors came. Had he not been overlooked, cruelly made to feel his dependence! Did he not have to beg for shoes, for a pair of trousers?

He could work himself into such a state of rage against Collin that its very violence suddenly brought him to his senses, and, too loyal to bring strangers into it, he sent hurriedly for young Jonas Collin to come to him immediately. Jonas would find him in weeping despair that he should have had such evil, ungrateful thoughts about the man to whom he owed most in life. It is unlikely that Jonas was able to soothe this strife in Andersen, though he tried his best by saying it was all due to disease, but probably the chance of expressing himself to someone he trusted gave him some comfort. Perhaps, too, in his brighter moods, he realised that it was not so much what old Collin had done or omitted to do which hurt, but more that which his own mimosa-sensitive pride had suspected and imagined.

For he often had brighter moods. The bursts of irritation and fear which he jotted down in his journal did not really represent him as well as the many letters which he wrote to Dorothea Melchior; gay, affectionate, full of detailed accounts of his real or imaginary state of ill-health, but full of equal solicitude for every member of the family and for each of the servants. She was his ideal correspondent, sending him long packets of news and descriptions; and he could send her long descriptions of what he saw on his travels without fearing that, like the Collins, she would ask for moderation. "Who more than you can put sunlight on a slip of paper", he wrote to her.

He was still travelling. In 1866 he had been in Portugal; twice to Paris in 1867; Paris and Germany in 1868; and to the Riviera in 1870, when he was again accompanied by Jonas Collin, who was older, wiser, more patient. Indeed, he had need of patience. One of Andersen's fears was that of missing trains, and they would often arrive several hours in advance at a station. In 1871 he at last visited Norway; where, largely through Bjørnson, a series of festivities had been arranged for him which greatly warmed his soul and wearied his body, and

got him yet another decoration, that of St. Olaf, "both to wear around the neck and a star for the breast". In Copenhagen, not long before, Andersen had met another Norwegian writer, a young man of unusual promise, but who was said to be rather formidable; so laconic and sombre. Andersen was quite timid about meeting him. But Henrik Ibsen was friendly and gentle, so much so that Andersen read aloud his new novelette, *Lucky Per*, a sparkling, vividly idealised rewriting of his own life, but in which the composer-hero dies at the very apex of his fame and happiness. Ibsen professed to find it most poetic; the author of *Peer Gynt* had been well coached. That other "Per" displeased Andersen very much; instead of reading it with shuddering gratitude, he called it unhealthy savagery and said it was enough to drive one mad! And he continued to read *Lucky Per* aloud: it was an antidote.

The *Lucky Per* side of him, the untarnished brightness, did flash out, even in these last sick years; and, besides the Melchior, those who perceived it most sensitively were two young writers who accompanied him on last travels, in 1872 and 1873, though he was then so ailing that ordinary mortals might well have been weary with him. But William Bloch who was with him in '72, and his friend Nicolaj Bøgh who went in '73, were not ordinary: they were both aesthetic and they had imagination. Andersen soon felt the difference between travelling with them and travelling with Jonas Collin, were his character ever so sterling. Bloch and Bøgh could be unashamedly enthusiastic; they had the artist's receptiveness; they responded with such shining joy and thrilled surprise to whatever he showed them: old cities, scenery, famous men, that he often, at great personal trouble, went out of his way to give them pleasure. Except for their reluctance to get up in the morning, they seemed to him what youth ought to be, and it revived the eternal youth in him. It helped, of course, that they admired him, were quite aware of escorting a poet-king.

Bøgh went so far as to think Andersen very handsome, though not indeed according to classic convention. But when he saw him enter a *salon* in black frock-coat and white choker, his hair nicely curled and with the order of Guadeloupe in a blue ribbon round his neck, he felt, and sensed that everyone

else felt as they involuntarily looked at Andersen, that a great man was entering. Bloch, though he saw the tall angular figure more realistically, liked to dwell on the beauty and spirituality of the high broad forehead, the finely formed, sensitive mouth.

Both of them loved to hear him talk, especially in a small circle when his bright side was up and he would chat away, gay, natural, youthful, original, unrolling one picture after another from his rich memory, always with scrupulous realism and truth. Sickness and old age seemed spirited away by his fresh dramatic humour, and he did not in the least mind if the joke were on him or revealed his peculiarities. He said once to Bøgh: "Don't think I haven't often used myself for model in the fairy-tales when I wanted to bring out some ridiculous human foible". He told of the first time his beard began to grow, which was not till he was nearly twenty-five; but he was afraid to go to a barber, and so he cut off the hairs himself with a pair of small sharp scissors. Then he went to Elsinore and forgot his scissors. His friends had only a pair of large paper-shears; he said they would not do, but nothing on earth could induce him to tell what he wanted them for. So he had to go to a barber. Trembling he entered a shop, and told the barber that his skin was very easily cut; but if the man could undertake to shave him without cutting him, he would give him three marks, a huge reward. These preliminaries made the barber quite feverish. He knelt down before the quivering Andersen and did his work with shaking hand, taking ages to finish. But all went well, and he got his three marks.

In the same youthful period, Andersen read Goethe's *Faust* for the first time; did not like it, and, happy to have found Goethe out, said airily to old Collin: "Now I've read *Faust*, and in my opinion Goethe is no poet". Quietly Collin answered that this might well be, "I am no authority on that subject". After this story Andersen said to Bøgh: "O God, how cheap I felt! I can never forget it; not a word had I to say."

He asked Bøgh if many people accused him of vanity, and as the honest youth did not dare deny it, Andersen said: "But it is not vanity. If someone gives me a beautiful present, and I love it and say: How beautiful it is, I do appreciate it! then everybody says: How nice that he is so grateful, what an admirable fellow.

But when, as it happens, I have received the gift of being able to write lovely fairy-tales—indeed I feel it is not my own doing—and I then in real gratitude for this gift say: Isn't it beautiful? then people exclaim, Hush, you mustn't say things like that! It is frightful vanity! But it is not vanity, it is gratitude. I say much more than anyone else exactly what I think. They tell me I mustn't, and I've tried not to, but I can't stop it; even if I make up my mind, out it comes directly afterwards. Now I've decided to say whatever is in me to say: the contrary is against my nature, and so I ought not to do it."

Naturally enough, he often returned beyond his youth to stories of his childhood, and he re-created for them his tall, dark, practical mother, his small, blond, dreamy father; told of the readings from Holberg, when his mother never could understand why his father laughed; of the walk in the fresh woods at Whitsun when his mother put on her one good dress and they brought their lunch. How his father had played and talked with him, much better than his mother could. His poor, yearning, frustrated father!

Bøgh told him that his father had been the root, and he the tree, and Andersen exclaimed: "But why should he be only root? Oh, if he had but lived to see the Odense feast in my honour, he would have died with joy! He could have borne his own life if he had seen how it developed into fullness in me. He would have understood the spiritual significance, my mother never."

But the moments when he felt that his own life was a fullness in itself were counterbalanced by others, common with those who have lived for feeling rather than for understanding, of despair because it had not been enough. "Suppose I live to be eighty," he said to Bøgh, "which I shan't, but even then I should have only thirteen years left. O God, O God, it is nothing! You may well believe that if I were only thirty and had my present development, then I should arrive at something: then I should really become world-famous—do you know what I'd do; I'd turn cart-wheels down the whole length of Østergade with sheer joy."

His imagination could still lift him into youth and this impish joy, but the cruel side, the self-torturing side, began more and more to predominate. Bloch saw him once, on their journey, shivering with anxiety and fear, merely because he, Bloch,

arrived back to the hotel half an hour later than he had promised. But the young man could see what Andersen had endured in this half-hour. In his imagination he had had to choose among many ways of dying for his companion, until at last he had been forced to select the most gruesome. He had imagined the corpse brought home, crushed and bleeding, with foaming mouth and glassy eyes. He had felt how horrible it is, staggering under this burden of terror, to be forced to keep his head clear so as to arrange everything. He had got the corpse coffined and sent away; he had written cautious preparatory letters to friends and family; he had at last, but at *last*, been able to leave this dreadful place. He had fled the vision of blood, but it had followed him. It had woven itself into all his dreams, obsessed all his thoughts, he could not endure it: it would make him ill, perhaps kill him—and all because—well! At last, there he is! Sound and smiling he comes through the door. Immediately after the young man has made himself a solemn promise: never, never to be late again!

Bloch understood.

CHAPTER XXVI

THOUGH it was Jules Sandeau who called Andersen the Haydn of literature, yet the French attitude was best summed up by a young Frenchman whom Brandes once asked how he liked the fairy-tales, and who answered that he found them "*un peu trop enfantin*", a trifle too childish. Even a French child of five might have said this, Brandes thought, since understanding rather than feeling is the French key-note, and Andersen's most fundamental trait had been to put the heart first.

"This trait", Brandes added, "is Danish." The unstinted affection that surrounded Andersen when he came home from his last journey to suffer his last illness was proof of those words. From the King, who had given him his own travelling-case and the ornamental title of Privy Councillor, to a journeyman cobbler who wrote him a long poem, the whole nation seemed to strive to give him testimonials of gratitude. All his friends, both old and new, performed miracles of care and loving patience, for the

flashes of the real Andersen became much rarer; he was almost incalculably irritable, often losing complete control of his

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temper. The extremely well meant, though misinformed, effort of an American newspaper to collect money for him, he regarded as an insult. At the least thing he raged and fumed, and then contrition would come, with the old man's quick, pathetic tears, because he had raged and fumed. But if he despaired too much, a word was enough and the friends came flying. Edvard Collin sat a whole evening and assured him gravely that he too felt just those curious fears about candles and fires: he too had to rise in the night several times to make sure that every light was out that should be put out. It was nothing; at their time of life everybody was like that. Was Andersen afraid of poverty? Edvard had managed his money so well for him that those fears could be proved foolish. Young Jonas came often. Nicolaj Bøgh scarcely left him. The two students who lived above him were entirely at his service.

With infinite precaution, as if shipping porcelain, he was brought out to visit two of his favourite manor-homes in the country; to breathe once more the sweetness of lilacs, see the "golden rain" of laburnum, the long linden avenues, the swans and water-lilies on the still, clear forest lakes, shining like the eyes of the Fairy-Tale when she had come, a graceful little girl, like Spring herself. But there too was sadness. Now she never came. The last time was in the form of a story, merrily ironic, of "Auntie Toothache", which he could write now when never a tooth had he left.

How he hated toothless age! He could still growl if they called him "the old Privy Councillor", but on his seventieth birthday, the 2nd of April 1875, he had hardly strength enough to receive the guests, the presents, the honours that streamed in all the day, both from home and abroad. Luckily those strong, good women, Dorothea Melchior and Henriette Collin, were there to help and to manage. Well in advance, the Melchiors had started a national subscription to get a statue of him put up in the charming park called the King's Garden, at the heart of Copenhagen; and now on this birthday the Committee was able to present him with a velvet-bound communication that there was money enough for it. The King gave him yet another decoration, and Andersen told his Majesty about the statue to be erected to him in the very place where he once in winter had shivered with the sparrows.

But to decide on the statue was not such an easy matter. The good simple sculptor submitted a design in which the author was seen practically enveloped in listening children. Andersen was furious. He lost no time in informing the sculptor that he could not endure anyone behind him when he read aloud; and that no one had ever seen him with children at his back, on his lap, on his knee; and, furthermore, that his tales were as much for grown-ups as for children: children merely understood the staging, only when mature could they grasp the whole meaning of them.

The children were instantly peeled off and a design decided on in which the story-telling poet sat in solitary state.

Early that June the Melchiors took him to "Quietude", their house by the Sound. He was ill, but for some weeks he was still able to be up a few hours each day and watch that most delightful of the Danish waters. On a bright morning surely he saw it sky-blue with a hundred little white-winged ships tacking across it; or with the water pale green and purple on a soft grey day, perhaps traversed only by a great square-rigged, four-masted ship, her cobweb rigging etched against the dull dark blue of the Swedish coast. Or the pointed brown sails of schooners turning to gold, and always the low little swishing waves. The entertainment of the Sound is infinite beauty and peace; it was not long before Andersen's sick irritability yielded to it, and to the quiet, firm, endless kindness of the Melchiors.

He accepted age. He accepted illness. He did not quite face the coming of that dark silent brother of Ole Luk-Øje, the little spirit of sleep, both of whom he had once described, but he was at peace. Did he see his life in the form of the most profound of his tales, "The Pine Tree", in which the eager tree never really enjoyed the present but always looked forward to more and better, until it was too late to enjoy anything? Was it then that he tied the chamois case with Riborg's farewell letter to him around his neck: the letter which Jonas was to destroy unread? Did he remember the soft, warm Portuguese wind and his own outburst that it was like a bridal kiss, "but I do not know what a bridal kiss is like! I imagine so much, I know so little!" No one knows; he lay there without pain, very silent, all his energy seemingly concentrated in gratitude for the love that surrounded

him. Always when he awoke from sleep he looked at Dorothea Melchior with a mild and happy smile, and once when she brought him a white rose he kissed her hand and blessed her.

At eleven o'clock in the morning of the 4th of August 1875 he died in a quiet sleep.

In the city of Odense there is now a Hans Christian Andersen Museum, built around the little cottage in which he is supposed to have been born. Visitors will be impressed by the many editions of his fairy-tales in nearly all European and Oriental languages, not forgetting Eskimo. They will be impressed by many different relics and tributes, but by none surely more than a clumsy satin pin-cushion once white, now yellow, which little Hans Christian sewed and gave to the pastor's widow in whose house he first heard poetry spoken of as something sacred; and by the photograph of a little altar with small bowls of offerings on it which Japanese readers once set up in reverence before the picture of the great Andersen.

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